# MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE

**Being Memoirs of the Years 1915-1972**
**Written in the Year of Grace 1988**

This is a work of delicate social satire by one of the most brilliant writers of the day. The author has hitherto been known best by his verse and by his "Spiritual Æneid." In the present work he is the fantastic novelist, with an eye for every modern foible.

**OPAL, LADY PORSTOCK**

**Edited by RONALD A. KNOX**

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*γένοιτο δ' ἂν πᾶν ἐν τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ.*

Herodotus, V. 9.

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BEING MEMOIRS OF
THE YEARS 1915–1972

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR OF GRACE 1988
BY
OPAL, LADY PORSTOCK

EDITED BY
RONALD A. KNOX

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DEDICATED TO

LAURA, TOMMY, E.V., AND MAURICE

THE FIRST READERS OF THIS BOOK
AND, I FEAR,
ITS KINDEST CRITICS

# CONTENTS


| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | EDITOR'S PREFACE | ix |
| | AUTHOR'S PREFACE | xiii |
| I | CHILDHOOD (1915–1930) | 1 |
| II | SCHOOL DAYS (1930–1934) | 16 |
| III | OXFORD (1934–1938) | 33 |
| IV | TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT (1938–1940) | 50 |
| V | ON THE SICK LIST (1940–1941) | 66 |
| VI | BUSINESS AND PLEASURE (1941–1944) | 81 |
| VII | WHAT I FOUND IN AMERICA (1944) | 98 |
| VIII | MY MARRIAGE (1944) | 112 |
| IX | LONDON SOCIETY AND ITS FOLLIES (1945–1953) | 128 |
| X | MY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION (1953) | 144 |
| XI | IN PARLIAMENT (1953–1959) | 159 |
| XII | HOME LIFE (1953–1963) | 175 |
| XIII | GREAT MEN OF THE DAY (1960) | 191 |
| XIV | AN OLD WAY OF MAKING A NEW DEPARTURE (1968) | 210 |
| XV | ENGLAND ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR (1972) | 226 |
| | INDEX OF PERSONS REFERRED TO | 241 |

# EDITOR'S PREFACE

*Being a fugal variation on the Author's Preface, which follows*

WE do ill, if we fail in veneration for the future —rather, we do impiously, for we beget it, and it is of our blood. The man, the nation that can sneer at unborn loves and unborn enthusiasms is as if a father should kick his son downstairs, unnatural. To sneer at what is new-fangled is an easy triumph, for the unborn cannot plead in answer ; cannot try to explain, far less succeed in explaining to us, what it will feel like to wear those clothes, use that unimagined slang, cultivate those types and thrill to those ideals. True, their unchartered and undesired advocates, the praisers of the future, have done their cause disservice : old age will have its hit back at the coxcombs for all the H. G. Wells-tedium that manhood endured, in forced silence. But our grandsons will be unwitting accomplices in the conspiracy of unconventionality that now educates us : there will be no attitudinizing about their scepticism, no *arrière pensée* in their immorality. To them, as to us, the fashion of the age will seem a Providential culmination : they will play hide-and-seek in its shadowy confines without stopping to ask whether or no they are lost in them.

And if they could come down to defend their cause against us, they would surely remonstrate with us by appealing to us to do as we would be done by: "Your own times, too," they would say, "used one day to seem uncouth, and hectic, and over-emotional: and brilliant pessimists disproved the possibility of doing what you did, before you had time to do it. Learn to forget that we were ever held up to you as models of what men should be: remember only that we are pictures of what men will be: to see human nature, fashioned of the same clay and cast in the same ultimate mould as yourselves, living in other conditions and reacting upon a situation that is not yours, may be tedious indeed, but not altogether unprofitable. Do not despise the future; you go into it, and from you it comes."

That is our apology—ours who are young—for this business of writing forecasts. You may, if you will, be content to read of us only what you will read in scrappy almanacks, but you will lose the sense of your own value in doing so: you will be like one who stops reading a *feuilleton* at the twentieth chapter, with no more anticipation than such as is offered by the author's hints of what will follow: or like one who strolls out when the third act of a drama is being played, and whispers to his friends a brief summary of what will be the rest of the plot. We are Act 5 of the drama, you are Act 3; without us, you cannot understand yourselves. You must follow in detail, as it unfolds itself, the development of the times that will spring from you, if you would taste the full savour of the times out of

which they sprang. You will accuse our prognostications of partiality and of false perspective: "All will not be so rosy," you will be tempted to say, "as sanguine forecast has pictured it, you have represented the exceptional as the typical, the typical as the exceptional; hard outlines have become blurred for you, and shadows, in their turn, taken substance." Well, we do our best; we are puppies, perhaps, and idealists, but you will do well to take our depositions and to sift them for yourselves.

One day you were young, and you too wanted to write forecasts; and you too found that to envisage the future was arduous, that old ways of thinking and *status quo ante* judgments of value imposed themselves upon your mind, and made you despair of the true estimate and the adequate phrase. And you found that, however unclouded your own faculty of prognostication, you searched in vain for the magic touch which would interpret the future for your older contemporaries, take them forward with you and make them see it with your eyes, your presuppositions. If you could be now what you were then, though it be farther than ever removed from the new days of which this book is an awful warning, you would be more disposed to bear a young man's nightmares with patience, and allow for him where he has exaggerated, and pardon him where he has erred.

R. A. K.

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

WE do ill, if we fail in veneration for the past —rather, we do impiously, for it begot us, and we are of its blood. The man, the nation that can sneer at dead loves and dead enthusiasms is as if a son should kick his father downstairs, unnatural. To sneer at what is old-fashioned is an easy triumph, for the dead cannot plead in answer; cannot try to explain, far less succeed in explaining to us, what it felt like to wear those clothes, use that forgotten slang, cultivate those types and thrill to those ideals. True, their unchartered and undesired advocates, the praisers of the past, have done their cause disservice: youth will have its hit back at the greybeards for all the Polonius-tedium that boyhood endured, in forced silence. But our grandfathers were unwitting accomplices in the conspiracy of convention that then educated us; there was no attitudinizing about their faith, no *arrière pensée* in their respectability. To them, as to us, the fashion of an age seemed a Providential culmination; they played ball against its brick enclosure without stopping to ask whether or no it cramped them. And if they could rise up to defend their case against us, they would surely remonstrate with us by appealing to us to do as we would be done by: "Your own times, too," they would say, "will

one day seem uncouth, and frigid, and unimaginative: and brilliant essayists will ransack your gold for the dross in it, their flashlight will make the colour fade from your enthusiasms. Learn to forget that we were ever held up to you as models of what men should be: remember only that we are pictures of what men were: to see human nature, fashioned of the same clay and cast in the same primal mould as yourselves, living in other conditions and reacting upon a situation that is not yours, may be tedious indeed, but not altogether unprofitable. Do not despise the past; you came from it, and into it you go."

That is our apology—ours who are old—for this business of writing memoirs. You may, if you will, be content to read of us only what you will read in scrappy histories, but you will lose the sense of your own value in doing so: you will be like one who picks up a *feuilleton* at its twentieth chapter, with no more preparation than such as is offered by the editor's synopsis of previous events: or like one who strolls in when the third act of a drama is being played, and will have his friends whisper a brief summary to put him *au fait* with the plot. We are Act 1 of the drama, you are Act 3; without us, you cannot understand yourselves. You must follow in detail, as it unfolds itself, the development of the times you sprang from, if you would taste the full savour of the times into which you sprang. You will accuse our retrospect of partiality and of false perspective: "All was not so rosy," you will be tempted to say, "as grateful memory has pictured it, you have represented the exceptional as

the typical, the typical as the exceptional; hard outlines have become blurred for you, and shadows, in their turn, taken substance." Well, we do our best; we are fogeys, perhaps, and sentimentalists, but you will do well to take our depositions and sift them for yourselves.

One day you will be old, and you too will want to write memoirs; and you too will find that to recall the past is arduous, that modern ways of thinking and *ex post facto* judgments of value impose themselves upon your mind, and make you despair of the true estimate and the adequate phrase. And you will find that, however unclouded your own faculty of retrospect, you will search in vain for that magic touch which would interpret the past for your younger contemporaries, take them back with you and make them see it with your eyes, your presuppositions. If you could be now what you will be then, though it be farther than ever removed from the old days of which this book is a remembrancer, you would be more disposed to bear an old woman's day-dreams with patience, and allow for her where she has exaggerated, and pardon her where she has erred.

# MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE

## CHAPTER I

## CHILDHOOD

> Why was I born, ye Fates, and why,
> Being born, did I not die?
> JAMES PHILPOT: *The Unanswered Question.*

I WAS born in 1915, a great anniversary, but one little kept. Little kept, because at the time of its occurrence England and France, the two protagonists of Waterloo, were leagued in what then seemed a holy alliance, and Germany, whose tardy aid settled the fortunes of that earlier conflict, could find no place, a hundred years later, in the sympathies of either combatant. My sex, it will be seen, belied the omens of my nativity. My father, at that time a commoner, was a Winterhead, of a good old Somerset family, whose ramifications it were poor modesty in an autobiographer to trace out for her own ennoblement. My mother, whose maiden name was Linthorpe, was the daughter of a Westmorland squire of comfortable means but little prominence. At the time of their marriage my father's business position was so sound (he was a partner in several rubber companies) that no great pains were taken about the drawing up of the

settlement ; and, by a series of family accidents which I do not propose to set out here, the whole of my mother's very considerable prospects passed into other hands. Such a deprivation caused, at the time, little foreboding to a man who had an ample income from stocks, quite apart from the position which he enjoyed as squire of Barstoke, a dream-like village that rests, half-hidden among mist-wreathed poplars, in one of the fairest valleys of Somerset.

It would have been my good fortune to find solace in the companionship of two brothers younger than myself, had not a mysterious destiny—which of us can read his life's record without confusion, when he considers the long tale of infants who never reach maturity ? —carried off both in the age of their innocence to a world where innocence has its value. An only child —for such I was, in effect—keeps fewer memories, I suppose, of its very earliest years than one which from the first takes its place among a series. The shadowy forms that people those years for me are the forms of domestic servants, comfort-bringing cooks and awe-inspiring butlers, whose short and simple annals there is no need to record in this book. My nurse, a woman of strong character and decided views, left me little permanent legacy of her care except that which most nurses leave to most English children—a horror of spiders and of the Pope. My mother was known to me as a lady who lived in a comfortable smell of tweeds on a hard, scratchy chair, in front of a table full of shiny things which I was forbidden to touch (not without reason, I found, for they were hot when touched),

and appeared to surround herself with a group of similarly dressed ladies whom it was my favourite parlour trick to distinguish, in spite of superficial resemblances, from her. My father was two round legs, with provocative little tags hanging out of either stocking, who must be approached cautiously if it were soon after a meal, because the approach was likely to result in a sudden, breathless elevation to the level of the mantelpiece—the level, but not the proximity, as two Dresden shepherdesses, still unbroken before me as I write, can testify.

My earliest at all datable reminiscence, and that is early enough in all conscience, is of the air-raid over London that took place on Whit-Sunday in 1917. We were, I have been told since, staying in London at the time, and I was hastily roused from sleep and carried into the cellars; for, although the danger from such raids in the Five Years' War was, judged by the standards of modern warfare, almost negligible, it was a novelty and as such a cause of panic. My only reason for remembering the incident is that, in her hurry to get me downstairs, my nurse ran a pin into me; which immediate sensation meant far more to me at the time than any nocturnal perils overhead. But that refers, of course, to my conscious memory: according to what the doctors used to tell me in the days when mind-curing was fashionable, the air-raid must have left a deep and permanent mark on my subconsciousness. I have been assured that I have to attribute to this cause my dislike of being in the dark (except when I am in bed), my occasional nervousness about loud,

sudden noises, my nervousness about other people, especially children, carrying firearms, my preference for having the door shut when I am asleep, my preference for having the window open on the same occasions, my want of ear for music, my inability to face learning the German language, my distaste for sausages, my fondness for lying in bed after I am called, my fear of cellars (which I thought was due to rats), my refusal to wear a maroon dress, my irritability when people whistle much in my hearing, my antipathy to the Tube when it is crowded, and Heaven knows what other sinister characteristics. Really, if this unremembered event made such a portentous difference in my life, so that my character was practically fixed from the moment of its occurrence (as these gentlemen seemed to imply), I am not sure that I ought not to end off my reminiscences here ! Whatever follows will surely seem trivial by comparison.

It was while I was still too young to be taking any intelligent interest in our family affairs that my father received his peerage. At a moment when the George Government was in a difficult position owing to the unfriendly attitude of certain of its Liberal critics, my father, who was before all else a patriot, rendered services to the chief powers of the nation which they were not slow to reward with a title. It is pleasant to think that we thus belong to the old nobility, before peerages were actually sold to the highest bidder—it was not until 1928, it will be remembered, that this necessary but regrettable innovation was introduced. My father would not take the title of Lord Barstoke,

because our villagers at home pronounced the name in a way that would have made him hardly distinguishable from Lord Bostock; it was characteristic of his easy way of doing things that he simply took down a Bradshaw, ran his finger at random down the index of names, and became Lord Blisworth for the rest of his life.

My girlhood was mostly spent in the country. My father, after his long days and often nights of work at the Board of Rubber Control, felt himself entitled to settle down when the war was over, and direct his financial schemes from a distance. A fatal resolution, could he but have foreseen its consequences! His preference was for the life of the country; he hated, he said, to be jostled by a crowd of strangers, and if the worst came to the worst, in a country place you could always go round with the professional. Hills were dear to him, and woods, and streams (especially the one you crossed in approaching the fifth green), and the little world of Barstoke was all he asked for and all he cared to know.

Barstoke, Barstoke in the 'teens of the century, how shall I ever describe you? How communicate your atmosphere to the generation that will soon have the pride of dating its letters with three noughts? The stone-walled court by which you approached the front door, the mellow façade of plaster, dating from the Fourth William, the terraces, the beds with their quaint, tiled borders, the open lawn on which in those days one used to play tennis, the box-hedges, cut as you never see them cut now, the kitchen garden, with

its warm brick walls, wasp-haunted, yet dangling prizes to the adventurous. The wide hall, panelled all through in pitch-pine, surrounded with the trophies of the chase and the spoils of our ancestors; "heads" of stags shot (if you please) on British soil; salmon found in Scottish lochs; arquebuses, flintlock muskets, Mills bombs, and every form of obsolete artillery. The dining-room, with its great maple-wood sideboard, that had facings of beaten copper; all the walls hung with priceless old photogravures from pictures by Landseer and Dicksee (I have seen £150 offered for a pair of these lately at Frosting's). The "drawing-room," as it was still called, with its gold-backed velvet chairs, its satin-textured wall-paper, its marble mantelpiece and encaustic-tiled fireplace; where, on a winter evening, my father would sit down with his friends to "bridge" or "auction," or, as a treat for myself, the then popular gramophone would elicit its curious, drawling imitation of the airs of the day. And over all this, when the curtains were drawn at evening, not the vulgar glare of our modern electrics, but the old acetylene gas that was even then going out of fashion, but used to shed, unless I deceive myself, a more equable and a more desirable radiance.

But it must not be supposed, because I describe the downstairs rooms so fully, that these were my familiar haunts. We were strictly brought up in those days, and did not wander here and there, consorting freely with our elders, as the young people do nowadays. No, at eleven every morning I would be ruthlessly sent

upstairs to change for my walk, nor was my presence tolerated for more than half an hour or three-quarters after luncheon: the real "children's hour" was from half-past five in the evening until, at half-past seven, I went up to dress for dinner. At times other than these, I only had the liberty of one downstairs room, where it was felt that I could not get in the way—the great library where my father used to write his business letters. How I loved those hours in the library; how I have regretted that, as fortune would have it, none of my old childhood's favourites were left to cheer me with their memories in later life! "Alice in Wonderland," with the original Tenniel pictures, first editions of Beerbohm and Benson, books of travel that thrilled you with discoveries at the South Pole or on Mount Everest, histories of the Five Years' War by men who had fought and lived through it, quaint old sheets like the *Tatler* and the *Sketch*, *Punch* with the old black-and-white drawings, atlases that still marked the old boundaries of "Austria-Hungary," and still put America on the left-hand side of the world, not in the middle; books on foreign travel, illustrated with the three-colour process; sermons of stout old traditional Protestant theology by Inge and Temple and other preachers of the day;—I might sprawl over these and such as these at my leisure, understanding little except the pictures, yet vaguely drinking in the atmosphere of that dead world to which I belong. I should explain that children began their education much earlier in those days, and I had learned to read by the time I was barely seven: at nine, I had a French governess who taught

me admirably in her own subject, though she was not, of course, allowed to puzzle my little head with history or science. I think that if I found myself superior in intellectual grasp to many of my contemporaries when I came to face the world later, it was this childish precocity which had laid the foundations of my knowledge.

But I have not yet taken you to the very hearth and centre of the whole establishment, the nursery, I mean, and the nursery passage. Take my hand, and let me pilot you carefully, for our way lies up the back stairs, which are full of perils. That door we pass is the one room in the house which children are not allowed to enter: that click-clicking noise you hear is Daddy playing billiards, all in a great room that is used for no other purpose. In front of us lies the linen cupboard, where there is a bogy who jumps out if you do not run past it quickly. And here (be careful!) the stairs are at their narrowest just where you can reach the friendly aid of the banisters. Now, open the swing-door, and there is the nursery passage in front of you! I would explain to you the use of that "pogo-stick" in the corner if you were not already tired of my *fin de siècle* reminiscences. . . . Yes, that is a model of a Handley Page, only it does not work now, and the split-nosed, pasty-faced pilot sits there and will ever sit, looking a fool, in enforced inaction. The badger in the glass case was caught on these grounds—a badger! You would be no less incredulous if I had called it a hyena. That chart on the wall was a picture of the "Western Front" in 1916—come away, you cannot recapture the

thrill of those old battles. . . . And here we are at the nursery door itself.

Yes, that is my dolls' house. No, there is no bathroom, no garage, no electric light laid on. The front wall, I am sorry to say, opens all in one piece, so that you cannot pay a call without discovering Esmeralda, if luck will so have it, at her toilet upstairs. There is no lift, and the staircase does not really pierce through the ground-floor ceiling. And yet, I do not fancy that I was very much less happy, or very much less proud, when I showed off this thin-walled, vermilion-bricked affair to my aunts than my friends can be when I inspect their more elaborate and more realistic dolls' flats. It is the spirit, after all, not the apparatus that matters. And that is my toy train, running round the ottoman. I do not know that its cardboard passengers wave their cardboard hats any the less enthusiastically because it is only common electricity, of an inferior voltage, that drives it round those terrifying loops. That is a " Teddy " bear, named after a once great predecessor of President O'Shaugnessy. But enough! I would not have brought you to see my toys, so sacred are they, if I had known you would curl your lip so disdainfully. Let me fish for a moment under the seat, and bring out something that will make your mouth water and leave you envious—yes, here it is . . . the stamp album!

Here are stamps—be seated, take it on your knees —issued by the last Tsar of Russia. Here is the lost dominion of that Emperor William whom the other nations of Europe brought to book. Here are the

double eagles of the old Austrian Empire. Here is a common English stamp with the post-mark "Dublin." Here are the pretty, fantastic devices turned out by the short-lived commonwealth of Czecho-Slovakia. Here is France represented in a cap of liberty, "that woman bowling a no-ball," my father used to call it, with no emblem of religion on the whole extent of the paper. Here is the Crescent lording it over Macedonia, here is republican Portugal, here is Iceland tributary to Denmark. What a history lesson for you on these strangely-milled slips of gummed paper! Yes, you may crow over me as you will, but you must envy me my stamp-album.

Am I wrong, or do the *events* of childhood impress themselves less on the mind than often-repeated scenes and habitual occupations? For myself, it is scenes that I can reconstruct rather than moments, habits rather than incidents. I can recall, for example, as if it were yesterday, the picture, annually viewed, of my mother making pot-pourri. She moved like a priestess over a mystical circle of rose leaves, her decoctions around her: I was allowed to hold the bottles, never to pour. Cinnamon, and orris root, and oil of cloves, and vervein, and vanilla were jealously dropped, to give the poor petals immortality. I will not make pot-pourri any more, since a chemist, unworthy of the name, has begun to deny knowledge of the very ingredients. Nor can I recapture that lost fragrance which would bring back my mother to the mysterious receiving-station of the senses; nor will anything make me buy the pot-pourri they sell you nowadays, "an

imposture, my dear," a friend has warned me, " which seems to be made of nothing but peppermint and eucalyptus."

My father, as is right, I recollect in sterner moods. Especially during one difficult fortnight, when he had strained his arm through a fall downstairs, and was confined, chafing, to the entourage of the house. It was, I think, characteristic of the man's energy that he should have set about teaching me to play golf. I was five years old at the time, and a pardonably unapt pupil. You must picture me on the " tennis-lawn," with an old putter swung over my shoulder, almost too heavy for my feeble strength, while he encourages me to drive. " Feet square, confound you ! No, like this ! Now, keep your eye on the ball ; the end of the club will get on all right without you ogling it, you minx ! Good Lord ! you're under it again. . . . there, there, don't cry ; replace the divot before Mummy sees it." He was an indulgent father, but he had no sympathy with weakness of the moral fibre, and I sometimes think that it is to him I owe, under Providence, the doggedness of character with which I have heard my friends credit me.

Of daily pictures, the one I recall with most vividness is my afternoon's outing. I do not mean in my earliest years, when my nurse would wheel me out (by hand, for this was before the days of permotulators) down to the end of the drive, and pass the time of day with the lodgekeeper ; but in that prouder period, when I had already passed my walking test, and was allowed to go out, as my Nurse said, " like a little lady."

Round came the motor, churning up the gravel, avoiding the beds as if by a miracle ; and there was our good old chauffeur, Masters, in his peaked cap and double-breasted great-coat, holding open the door for us. There followed, in early days, the starting of the car by a sort of winding apparatus in front (unless my memory deceives me) : I always felt a certain sense of ceremonial deficiency about the " self-starter." Then down the broad sweep of the drive, with the giant araucarias on either side, under the lichenous stone archway of the lodge, and all Somerset was before us. The apples tugged at their overloaded branches, the cows stood patiently regardant in the water-meadows, the forester's axe clicked on the hill-side, the old church-towers beckoned and were swallowed up behind us, sun-bonneted old dames slipped, curtseying, into the hedge-rows—what better fate could a fairy enchanter bring us, than to be always at the springtime of life, and always at the autumn of the year ?

I cannot remember much of the friends who called or came to visit us. My mother's family was represented by an old, angular Miss Linthorpe, and a married sister, Lady Trecastle. Miss Linthorpe, an aunt of my mother's, already belonged to an older generation. You could tell it from the big, tortoiseshell-rimmed lorgnettes she wore (these were a kind of spectacles held in the hand by a stem, more for the purpose of staring your *vis-à-vis* down than for any assistance they gave to the eyesight). You could tell it from the way she dropped her final g's, and said " What ? " suddenly, without meaning to ask a question, at the

end of the sentence. You could tell it, above all, from a curious dignity she had, a dignity which seemed to sit upon her as of right *because she was a woman*, that I have never known except in my earliest memories. She was very brusque with my mother, especially about my own education. On one occasion, I remember, I had torn a rather pretty fan of my mother's, because she had refused to grant me some trifling request. My mother, instead of passing over the incident as a modern mother would, was endeavouring to make me say I was sorry. When Miss Linthorpe came into the room, and the situation was explained to her, she asked, as if it was the most natural thing in the world, " Why don't you send the little hussy to bed ? " My mother explained that, according to the latest educational theories, sending children to bed early when they were young was likely to lay up the seeds of insomnia for them in early life. " Insomnia ? " said Miss Linthorpe, " so much the better ; she won't inherit Blisworth's gross habit of snoring." " But, Aunt Adela, I daren't ; I don't know what her father would say." " Blisworth," said the imperturbable old lady, " is a fool." " Hush, aunt dear ! " expostulated my mother ; " you mustn't say such things before the child." " Why not ? " was the answer. " I shan't be the last person she hears calling (she pronounced it " callin' ") Blisworth a fool, unless she grows up deaf." I liked Miss Linthorpe, in spite of her brutal manners, and never dreaded the prospect of her visits.

Lady Trecastle lived in Ireland : at least, she used to spend about three weeks of the year at her Irish house

before the Free State was declared in 1922, and after that never went near it at all, but filled in her time complaining of the "rebels," as she called them, for making it impossible. Her visits to us were rather lengthy, and I have heard my father speculate whether he could not bribe the "rebels" to lure her back to Ireland and kidnap her. The fact was, I suppose, that English families had become so accustomed to playing the rôle of a governing race in Ireland that they found it hard to be tolerated as foreigners. It is difficult now to imagine the feeling that was excited then over the "Irish question."

Of our neighbours, our most frequent callers were a certain General Lestrange and his wife, whom I used to think very old-fashioned because my nurse told me they believed in ghosts. I imagine they were really bitten by that curious wave of occultism that made itself felt in English society at the beginning of the century. But I am afraid this undistinguished record will become wearisome if I prolong it. My father had long since given up political life, finding, no doubt, that it unduly cramped his energies: "It's all very well," he would say, "but you can't really do two things at once": consequently, the political life of the period passed us by, and we rusticated amidst a small coterie of country squires, who still (Heaven knows how) kept their estates and their large houses going. But my father's inattention to the drift of the world around him was to have more fatal consequences. When I was only just fifteen, there came a black day on which he appeared gloomy and preoccupied, and I must

not disturb him because he was "worried about business." He spent all day at the telephone, and we all knew that something must be seriously wrong: indeed, they rang up from the club-house to know whether he was ill. It proved in the end that, through mismanagement on the part of others, he had lost far the greater part of his money, and it would be necessary in future to live in a much smaller house and sell Barstoke to anyone who would offer. By great good fortune, we managed to find purchasers: some Benedictine sisters, who had outgrown their previous accommodation, were willing to pay a good price for it. We were equally lucky on the other side, and secured a comfortable, though far from luxurious house, at Beaconsfield, just opposite the fourth tee.

I have visited Barstoke again not very long since, and the good sisters were very kind to me. They had turned the billiard-room into a chapel, and broken up many of the larger rooms, so that I could hardly recognize them; but it is something to feel that the shell of the building remains, and is likely to remain, intact. And yet I could not be altogether at my ease there, for we like our earliest memories to remain undisturbed: and for me, though I have lived long since then and seen many cities and travelled far from my starting-point, nothing will ever appeal again as the park did, and the lodge-gates, and the unwieldy tower of the village church beyond them, and the trees of Barstoke, and its fruit garden.

## CHAPTER II

## SCHOOL DAYS

If the child is father of the man, so also is he, or rather is she, the mother of the woman.—ARCHDEACON BUNTING.

THE same change in our family fortunes which made it necessary for us to give up the old home at Barstoke made it necessary also for my parents to send me to school. It was only long afterwards that I realized what bitter heart-burnings this decision caused them, or what anxious discussions preceded it. To understand their reluctance, you have to remember that at the time of which I write no privilege of the governing classes was more tenaciously preserved than their exemption from education. The same instinct of struggle which bade the poor keep away from the workhouse bade the rich keep their children from school. My father in particular had often declared that no child of his should undergo the degradation of being taught so long as he could break stones to avoid it. But our case was really desperate; to keep me at home was almost beyond his means, quite apart from the grant of £200 which, on condition that I kept all my terms, would be paid to me annually for my attendance. My mother protested, indeed, that at fifteen I was far too young to be away from home; but in those days the objection did not carry

the weight it would carry nowadays: you would still see poor little mites of ten or eleven being packed off to some place of education, with the knowledge that for eight long weeks they would never see their dolls and their toy horses again. Those were stern days, but I sometimes think the discipline was good for our character.

How vividly, especially in childhood, the tragedies we undergo inwardly print on our minds the recollection of the scenes in which we experienced them! I must often have travelled by train before, yet this was the first railway journey of my life which has left me any recollection of it. It took me but two hours to reach the heart of Berkshire (for this was in the days when the railway was still used for quick travel, and the private companies, often in competition with one another, used to run trains at what we should consider break-neck speed), but those two hours seemed to me like a Purgatory. And yet, in a calmer mood, the scenery at which I peered out through the carriage windows would have seemed beautiful enough. As soon as you passed Maidenhead you were in the country; the leaves were just beginning to turn with the autumn along the comfortable, purposeless banks of the full-fed Thames; to give place, once Twyford was reached, to the burning regiments of dahlias and early chrysanthemums that fringed Sutton's seed-grounds. Only as we slowed down through the smoky suburbs of Didcot did we slacken speed; and then on again into the Downs, with the spell-stricken glamour of their mysterious repose. At Challow I crept out, a woe-begone little

figure, on to the platform, and faced the huge effort of daring which I needed to intercept a porter and ask him to take my luggage out—a necessary expense, for of course we used to take our own linen about with us, and our heavy trunks had to be committed to the care of the guard. The porter was a less formidable character than my fears had painted him, and when I had paid up my two shillings wished me " Good afternoon " with the old-world courtesy of the time.

Miss Montrose's school, for which I was bound, proved to be a pleasant old Georgian building, standing in a park of its own at the foot of the Downs. It was difficult to imagine, even then, that this huge barrack of a place, which had contained some forty rooms even before its enlargement, had ever been utilized for the needs, and staffed by the servants, of a single family ! It was now some three times its original size : and yet a school of a hundred girls found it cramped and uncomfortable enough. I was horrified to find, on my arrival, that I should have to share a maid with five other girls, and that my bedroom would be the only sanctum in which I could find privacy. Miss Montrose herself, a prehistoric old lady who still affected the knitted jumper and the bobbed hair of fifteen years earlier, greeted me with a slightly *de haut en bas* manner—the legacy, I suppose, of the old days of school-mistressing. She was a fine character, and a few years earlier, though then nearly sixty years of age, had gone up to Oxford and taken her degree in book-keeping and dairy-work. It is no small testimony to her strength of character that she was able to manage a school of

a hundred girls with only fifteen assistant mistresses to help her. Most of these I found to be pleasant, civil-spoken sort of women, many of whom had embraced school-mistressing as a vocation, although they might have gone far in one of the learned professions.

I always distrust people who say they look back to their school days as the happiest time of their lives: either they must have been unimaginative women from the first, or retrospect has mellowed for them the sour realities of memory. For myself, during the earlier part of my time at any rate, I was profoundly unhappy. Looking back, I think it was chiefly the irritating restraints which were put upon our liberty that annoyed me. No girl, for instance, might go up to London more than twice a term (unless, of course, she was visiting her parents). No girl might enter the public house in the village. No girl might keep a motor-bicycle—and so on. The science of education was then in its infancy, and school authorities did not realize that, in thus fettering the liberties of their young patronesses, they were unfitting them for positions of responsibility later on, and causing the gravest inhibitions in their subconsciousnesses. These regulations were enforced by a system of punishments which would, nowadays, be condemned as brutalizing. In proportion to the magnitude of the offence, the offender used to receive a quarter of an hour's, or half an hour's, or an hour's " talking to " by Miss Montrose herself. She would make you sit down in a comfortable chair while she sat opposite you on a stiff one, and so would lecture you, by the clock, unmercifully. She

would point out that the mistresses, who gave their services in the cause of education for nothing or next to nothing, ought to be treated with admiration and respect; that you yourself, since you were taking pay from the country to learn as much as you could, ought to obey the rules of the institution which made this possible for you. If it was a case of insolence towards one of the teachers, she would dwell especially on the "caddishness" (she was of the old school, and did not mince her words) of bullying one's social inferiors. If the worst came to the worst, she would threaten to report on you as having reached Standard Eight, which would mean that you would have to leave the school as having finished your education. I never knew one of my school-fellows get through one of these interviews without scalding tears. It was not, I believe, till the fifties that anything was done to curb the severity of such punishments.

The lessons themselves, managed on the old high-and-dry lines, were not calculated to arouse any enthusiasm in young minds. Oh, the drudgery of those hours of geography, when we spent our time constructing hills, valleys, and table-lands out of clay in the garden, or made models of the railway systems across the lawn: when, perched on separate islands in the bathing-pool, we had to launch mechanical boats to one another, freighted with the principal exports of the various countries—it is no wonder that, with these methods, the science took little hold on our imaginations! It might win the assent of the brain, but it could find no lodgment in our hearts. Oh, the dreary mornings we spent

in weaving baskets, or making artificial flowers, or calculating our winnings at *petits chevaux* with the mathematical mistress! The truth is, perhaps, that I was too young for these things, and was all the time having to conform to the standard of a class intellectually in advance of my own attainments. My most grateful memories are of the mistress who, four times a week, drew French out of us: and that, I am afraid, not because she attracted us, but because it was an understood thing that in those periods it was safe to "rag" as much as you liked. The lowest French class was taken by a master, the only man employed on the staff, and him we spared in deference to his sex; but Mademoiselle Amboise was fair game for us, and I am afraid the poor woman must have suffered acutely "Ah, Mademoiselle, que je m'ennuie!" we would say to her from time to time, and the poor soul would rush to your side to comfort you. She would carefully teach us the chorus of a song, and then, when she had sung through a verse of eight lines in her beautiful voice, we would either have forgotten the words of the refrain, or intentionally murder the tune of it, and the whole process had to be begun again. Or she would deliver the whole of the opening soliloquy in some old-world play of Rostand's, and then look round for the new characters to come in, only to find that we had all played truant and run off into the country, leaving one girl in the seats of the little theatre (Mademoiselle was very shortsighted) to do the applause all by herself! I remember one girl affecting to have lost her memory, so as to be unable to speak a word of French, and our

delight when Mademoiselle Amboise, breaking the strict rule against talking English in French class, burst out, " Ah, Miss ——, you are little pig ! "

But there are more grateful memories, too, of those all-too-rare half-holiday afternoons (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, as far as I remember) when we would make off to the old haystack and smoke there, as I suppose schoolgirls always have and always will, and talk of what we would do when we were women : or take car into Didcot for a good " blow-out " and an evening at the pictures : or the rainy days, when one " class-room " would invade another, and leave behind it a confused wreckage of Greek statues, glass cases, and electric light globes. There were the football matches too : it is hard for me, now, to believe that I was once a promising half-back ! We played the old " Association " game, of course : as yet very few girls' schools had taken up Rugby. I suppose I have never experienced, in a long life, such a protracted thrill of excitement as when I played, in my third year, in the great match against Radley, and the fortunes of the game hung in the balance for a full half-hour. Summer has less poignant athletic memories for me, I suppose because we still played cricket for the most part, and could do little to improve our game at tennis with only five covered courts.

When I was going through my dear mother's things after her death in '59 I came across a whole bundle of my old school letters in one of her desks. It was pathetic to see how carefully she had treasured them, arranged them, tied them up in ribbon of different

colours according to the year they were written in. The old, blue-black ink we used then has stood the test of time far better than most modern documents will. There is little about the letters that is of general interest; they are just an expression of the aims and interests, the hopes and the solicitudes, of girlhood just turning to womanhood; hopes how buoyantly eager! Solicitudes how lightly borne! I print one of them here, written towards the end of my first year at school, in the hope that, if nothing else about it arrests attention, the prim, stately language of fifteen-years-old in those days will call for a smile or for a blush, which you will, from the precocious, slangy young misses of to-day.

BISTON HALL,
CHALLOW.

*June* 18, 1931.

DEAR OLD MUM,

*Hope you didn't think I was dead, not hearing from me all these three weeks: fact is, I've been abso-jolly-lutely full programme just lately with these theatricals coming on. They are going to be some effort, I can tell you. All the chaps say the scene where I come in drunk is like nothing on earth. But I shan't spoil it for you beforehand; you* are *coming down, aren't you? Don't bring Dad if you think the old thing will be shocked; he is so mid-Edwardian about some things. We beat the London Hospital nurses by nearly an innings last Saturday: they were feeling frightfully bucked with themselves, too, when they came down, because they hadn't lost a match*

*this season. You should see Woollcombe, our leg-break bowler! She simply made rings round them. I was top last week in gardening, which was one in the eye for old Monty, because she'd got her rag out with me rather, as she said I was wasting my time and the country's money—such bilge! Only three more blinking weeks now to the hol.'s;—oh, I say, could you write to Monty and say it's very important I should come home two days early? Because I simply must go to the Rothwells'. They don't mind your going home early much, really, even if it does mean missing one or two of these filthy exams, which are the limit anyhow. A new music master has just turned up, with top-hole eyes: remind me to show him you when you come down. I was wondering if perhaps you could let me have a little more money? Because there's two of the chaps I must, simply* must *buy birthday presents for, and heaps of incidental expenses, and it's a fact I haven't a five-bob note to bless myself with. But not if it's going to mean a row with the old bread-winner. Lots of love.*

*Your own*

OPAL

My holidays were chiefly spent at home, and indeed I could have asked nothing better. Few families, with our moderate income, can have enjoyed the proximity of London combined with the neighbourhood of such romantic scenery. Our house, I have said, faced on the fourth tee; and from the front windows the view stretched away, uninterrupted except by occasional bunkers, till on a clear day you could distinguish the flag on the seventh green. I saw little in those days of

my father, who believed with Hector that home was the proper sphere of woman ; for himself, he was out early and late in all weathers : a business interview would sometimes take him up to London, otherwise nothing disturbed the noiseless tenor of his daily habits. If there was a championship match on, we would hear all about it in the evening ; for the rest, we knew that he did not care to be cross-questioned about the little incidents of the day. Yet, for all his silence, there was no mistaking the fire of the enthusiast burning in his eye. Nothing could daunt his tireless energy, though he was already a man of over fifty. I can still picture him as he was then, a fine, upstanding figure in his wide, loose knickerbockers and a coat that seemed full of extra seams and double linings ; a trifle portly, yet carrying himself with a sort of natural swing. We have all too few of his type nowadays !

If my father was a type of manliness, my mother seemed and seems to me a perfect type of womanliness. The hundred little domestic duties of the day—in those days, the mistress of the house would order the dinner, go through the books, supervise the work of the servants, and altogether behave as a sort of unpaid agent —would occupy her till eleven or half-past eleven in the morning : only then would she put her season ticket in her reticule and set out for the mystery of the shops and the repose of her club. If an exhibition, a call, or a matinée was likely to detain her, she would leave word that she was not to be expected back till after tea, and the routine of the household would

proceed as usual in her absence. She never came back from these expeditions without a catalogue for me, an evening paper for my father—some little token to assure us that her thoughts had been with us during the hours of enforced separation. Alas, how old age makes us realize the little return we made in youth for the loving solicitude of our parents! I often used to see little or nothing of her for a week, since my doctor wisely insisted that I should always have breakfast in bed after a dance. And dance I did, I am afraid, almost every night, if only to compensate myself for the early hours and rigorous discipline of the school, where half-past ten saw us at work every morning, and, on whole school days, preparation would not be over till half-past six. I was, I think I may say, a good dancer; not that I ever had much ear for music or sense of rhythm, but my athletic, I had almost said, my acrobatic, gifts stood me in good stead. I will not attempt to recall, so old-fashioned do they seem nowadays, the movements that were popular when I was a girl. What has become of you all now, my partners in those distant Georgian drawing-rooms? If you still live, do you still remember as I remember the measures we trod, then so riotous-seeming? The Monkey-grip, the Kansas scramble, the "Mind your foot, honey," the Snake-glide, the Anyhow-slither, the Buzz, the Rattle-snake Fight, the Darkies' Stagger, and all the rest of them?

When I remember all the friends so linked together
I've seen around me fall like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one that treads alone some banquet hall deserted.

—or does nothing really desert us, except our dreams ?

But what is this ? I am becoming sentimental. Let me return to the grim shades of my prison, the dull days of school routine. I had an open, sunny temperament, and made friendship easily ; some, as I suppose is usual at that age, seemed at the time as if they could end only with life. And yet, how little effect really our school friendships have on us ! Ten years after we have left, we meet the bosom friends of girlhood as strangers. Some of them, of course, have married : and with them, try as they may to conceal it, it is hard not to feel that their husbands have just a suspicion of jealousy against their wives' woman friends. But even with the others,

> Through what climes they've ranged, how much they've changed !
> Time, place, and pursuits assist
> In transforming them—

perhaps, after all, it is best so : for neither our critical faculties nor our sense of humour are at their best in those early years. My chief crony was a wild, devil-may-care Irish girl whom we called " Squint " Hennessy, who led me into plenty of scrapes and more than once brought me under the threat of " Standard Eight." One of these escapades cost me, I think, the most anxious night of my life.

Our religious needs, when we had any, were served by a little old village church a mile or two away, at Goosey. How well I remember the atmosphere of the Sunday-evening service there, the smell of Sunday

clothes and old books and old, dusty hassocks; the painstaking harmonium, waking up like an old gentleman from a nap when we sang *Glory be* at the end of the Psalms, the clatter of the bell-ringers as they filed up into church at the beginning of service! It was an old church, and is still visited by tourists, I believe, for the sake of some really fine 1850 stained glass. But it will have changed with time: in those days it had more the appearance we should associate with a Catholic Church now—the seats, for example, were all on the same level, and the pulpit was fixed, close to one of the side walls; the sermons were delivered by word of mouth; the old, sonorous English of Cranmer was still droned out almost in its entirety, with something of a ceremonial effect; the congregation knelt for the prayers, or at least sat apologetically, head buried in hands. We did not, I need hardly say, appreciate this atmosphere at the time, and seldom went near the place—compulsory attendance was only inflicted as a punishment on those who had an unusually dark record of rule-breaking during the week. But quite recently the Diocesan Board of Finance (the Reading diocese was always a go-ahead one) had introduced the system by which, while town congregations contributed to an offertory at the end of the service, country congregations, as being attracted to Church with more difficulty, received a slight honorarium instead, in return for their attendance. "Those that were strong," as the Archbishop of York said, "ought to bear the infirmities of those that were weak." Late on in the term, when our pocket-money was mostly exhausted,

a fair sprinkling of Biston Hall girls would be in their places to secure the coveted sixpence after the sermon.

It was on such an occasion that Squint Hennessy and I were making our way back from Church on a summer evening, feeling particularly good after a stirring address from the curate, a favourite of ours. At peace with the world, we each lit a " Woodbine " to light us and cheer us on our way home. By ill-luck Miss Mersham, the numismatics mistress, met us half-way, and threatened to report us if we did not put out our cigarettes immediately. Squint was at the top of her form that evening : " report if you like, Golly," she said, " but we'll make you repent of it if you do." Miss Mersham was ill-advised enough to lay information against us, and each of us had a quarter of an hour's " talking to " : special emphasis was laid, I remember, on the crime of setting a bad example to our mistresses. We wept floods of tears, and for the next three days did everything to make the informant's life intolerable to her. We brought frogs into class, put lamp-black on to her duster, squirted her with water-pistols—in a word, we behaved as high-spirited girls will behave when they are smarting under a sense of injustice. Finally, I remember, we put a large bust of Artemis in her bed. The next day she seemed curiously silent, and when we came out of preparation at half-past six the terrible rumour went round—Miss Mersham had run away !

It was a memorable night when the whole school wandered over the Downs, till nearly two in the

morning, searching for the truant mistress. Squint and I in particular were inconsolable ; our action had been merely thoughtless, and neither of us had really felt vindictive : it terrified us to think that our victim was now running the risk of expulsion as the result of our heedless behaviour. She was, in the end, caught by a porter at Swindon, and sent back to Biston Hall ; and we all cheered lustily when Miss Montrose announced her intention, after considering the circumstances carefully, of retaining her on the staff. She became one of our most popular mistresses, and did so well that, three years later, she was enabled to leave the profession altogether.

I do not know what became of Squint : some of my other friends I have managed to keep up with, at least by correspondence. " Fatty " Macdonald became manager of a bank in Sheffield ; Tulip Hawkesley went on to the stage as Yvette Dombrowski ; Wynefryde Banks married well and went into her father-in-law's business ; Jane Palliser, our star goal-keeper, was later captain of a P. & O. " liner." But no one fulfilled her early promise like Juliet Savage, once well-known as the editress of the *Spectator* in the fifties. It was with me that she undertook her first journalistic venture, the *Bilston Hall Rocket,* which ran into four numbers and attracted a good deal of attention among our fellow-pupils. I have still the old copies by me ; the List of Contents from a single issue will give some idea of its character :

## THE BILSTON HALL ROCKET

(AND CHALLOW CHRONICLE, GOOSEY GOSPELLER, ETC., ETC., ETC.)

CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Lines written in Prep. | 1 |
| My old Kentucky Girl (Poem), by E.W. | 2 |
| The Adventure of Bloodgush Grange (*continued*) | 2 |
| How to get Marks, by One who knows | 4 |
| Golly and the Gondola (Anonymous) | 5 |
| Spanking Sarah, the Cow-girl of Arizona, by P. F. | 5 |
| Football Notes, by Half-back | 7 |
| The Pool of Solitude (Poem), by F. F. W. | 10 |
| Things we don't half want to know, by the Editress | 10 |
| Blue-face, my Squaw (Song), by R. E. H. | 11 |
| Paris at Night, by Wanderer | 11 |
| Go, lovely Montrose (Parody), Anonymous | 13 |
| The Great Bilston Hall Film | 13 |
| How I mean to spend the Hol's, by Naughty Nan | 15 |
| Correspondence | 15 |
| Puzzles | 16 |


We wrote the paper merely for fun, and as a way of getting our own back against some of the mistresses who had been unlucky enough to offend us. Judge of our surprise, both Juliet Savage's and my own, when we were told that the literary promise we displayed had been judged so considerable as to induce the School Governors to send up copies of the *Rocket* as a " thesis " for the St. Lucy's Hall scholarships ! Scholarships were awarded to both of us ; and I was now in the happy position of being able to spend four years at Oxford, while contributing a clear £200 a year to the support of my parents. I left Bilston Hall in the summer of 1934,

not with much regret : I had had happy times there, but I ached for more liberty and a wider sphere of activity, and I felt that I had been greatly misunderstood there. I have never seen it since.

## CHAPTER III

## OXFORD

O, the sweaty clothes, and O, the smashed window-panes, Ecstasy !—WRIGGLESWORTH : *Thoughts in a Parsonage.*

I FIND it customary among the writers of reminiscences, if they have had the privilege of an Oxford or Cambridge education, to make great play with the dons who were already greybeards in their time, survivals from a yet earlier past. Thus, we shall be told of old Tommy So-and-So, who was so well seasoned that he could carry his five glasses of port after dinner and get to bed without assistance : or how What's-his-name was reputed never to have had a bath in fifty years of residence : or how the Master of This was so absent-minded that he delivered a lecture on Homer by mistake for one on political economy, and his audience were so little attentive that none of them noticed the difference, while the President of That used to be a great sportsman in his time, and rode a motor-bicycle at full speed round Addison's walk on Sunday afternoon for a bet. This is all very well, but it is not first-hand reminiscence. How many of my young friends who are up at Oxford now know anything about the patriarchal figures of the place, know so much as the very names of them ? You have passed them toiling up Headington Hill, that Professor of European reputation who still

wears the soft flannel collars and the "plus-four" knickerbockers of the early thirties, that venerable Tutress of St. Veronica's, whose archaic skirt barely reaches below her knees; and—confess it—you have never had the curiosity to ask who that old blighter is. Why should you expect us, then, who write reminiscences, to tell you stories of the old dons that were already skin and bone when we matriculated? We, like you, were young, and lived in a self-contained world of youth. Let nobody expect from me a description of Oxford which shall represent it as a fossil-museum of the still remoter past. There were elderly dons in my time, but I do not remember coming across them at all, except one whom I met at a tea-party, and mistook for a fresher, because at seventy or so he still looked so incorrigibly youthful!

My academic career at Oxford was destined to be successful beyond my expectations. When I first looked at the list of subjects which I should need in order to go through Pass Moderations, my heart sank within me. Latin! Greek! Logic! Did they think I had stepped straight out of the Middle Ages, that I should be prepared to face examination in such subjects as these? But a reference to Appendix XVIIIc of the Regulations reassured me. I had to take Latin "or some other foreign language"—the old days at Barstoke with my French governess were to come in useful after all. Instead of Greek I could take Mineralogy, Practical Farming, Middle Icelandic, Military Tactics, Geography, Mental Therapeutics, Book-keeping and Short-hand, Levantine Literature, or Old Testament

Anthropology. I need hardly say that I selected Geography at once. There was a still longer list of substitutes for Logic, which seemed more formidable, but I was assured that it was almost impossible to fail in the Theory of Statistics—and so indeed I found it. My first two terms, in fact, made little demand on my intellectual capacities, and I was free to look about me, make friends, taste life, and enter into the multifarious activities of the place.

I found little or no jealousy of the freshers, little or no anxiety to keep them in their place, on the part of the second-year women. On the contrary, the breakfast parties at which they used to entertain us were some of the merriest functions of my life. Heavens, what huge breakfasts we ate in those days! Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, porridge, boiled eggs or even eggs and bacon, toast, butter, marmalade, sometimes jam—and yet we felt fresh and energetic after them, ready to discuss any problem of the universe! We would sit round smoking afterwards—pipe-smoking was just coming in—indulging in our interminable conversations, till at last the claim of half-past nine lecture broke up the little company. To be late for lecture was a serious thing in those days; if the lecturer were short-tempered, it meant that you missed your guinea attendance fee. "No, it's no use!" our geography lecturer, Hoskyns of B.N.C., would shout at us, exasperated but still courteous. "I can't have you ladies come clattering up the Hall in those great boots, making a noise like a troop of cavalry: go back, and save up your pocket-money!" He was something of a misogynist, but unrivalled at his

subject, and I do not think I ever saw a man better tailored. I early decided to read geography for my final schools, so as to continue under his tuition.

It was an idle undergraduate even in those days who did not keep her four lectures every morning. If schools were not hanging over you, Quarter Day was, and there was no temptation to " cut." Dr. Feilding, of Christ Church, had for a time a particularly successful lecture on Ukrainian antiquities, until it was discovered that he was giving his pupils a bonus of ten shillings ! This practice was rightly discouraged by the University authorities, who pointed out that it practically amounted to paying people to be educated. By half-past one we were whizzing along the moving pavement in the middle of St. Giles' (one of the first to be started, I believe, in the United Kingdom. The then Principal of Pusey House would never travel on it : " these young ladies are too *fast* for me," he said waggishly, more than once) and *en route* for our luncheon. This, according to the old Oxford tradition, was a very simple meal—just a chop or a cutlet with vegetables, a cold sweet, and a plate of cheese and butter ; I doubt if modern Oxford would stand it ! Afternoon lectures had not then been instituted, and between luncheon and tea we ordinarily devoted ourselves to sport. I continued my football career with some success, but an unlucky strain prevented me ever getting my Association half-blue. Tea was our chief social meal, and I doubt if I had tea alone more than a dozen times during the whole period of my residence. The habit of " lacing " one's tea has grown up since my

time, and I do not think my young friends are any the better for it. By six o'clock we would be at our books, till at seven, the old College clock boomed out the hour for dressing.

I do not know that I have ever seen a prettier picture than was formed every night by the College dinner. The harmonious lines of the building itself—enlarged, of course, but enlarged in keeping with its original architectural design—the soft glow of the wire electrics, falling on the frilled shirt-fronts of the dons as they sat at the high table ; the long rows of sable-jacketed and sable-skirted undergraduates, the kindly, weather-beaten faces of the old " guides " who waited on us—it vied, I think, in beauty, with the brightest of our modern ball-rooms. But attendance in Hall was not compulsory, and as often as not one would be dining out at the O.U.D.S., the Asquith, or the New Bolsheviks with a party of friends from other Colleges. (Vincent's and the Grid had not yet admitted women.) That would mean a scramble to be back before the College gates shut at ten, with the fear of meeting on your way there, all capless and gownless, the terrible figure of the Proctress, with her attendant " cowers." A friend of mine, Ena Toogood, coming back from a fancy-dress ball in the costume of King Henry VIII, had the good fortune to pass herself off on the Proctress as a man, and baffle the Proctor by giving her College as St. Lucy's !

Nor was all always peaceful even within the confines of the College. There were nights (mostly after some athletic triumph) when the Quad rang to merry

choruses and catches (sometimes) uncomplimentary to the dons. But these occasions were rare; the rowing women objected to it because, for the greater part of the year, they were in training; and the working set, who had great influence in the College at this time, were loath to be disturbed at their studies. I myself belonged to the dancing set my first two terms, but joined the working set afterwards as the result of a personal quarrel with Lady Anne Forres, the leader of the dancing set, who suspected me, I think, of rivalry. We were not much divided up into cliques at this time, though I believe that later on the admission of Astor scholars from America and the colonies tended to break up the solidarity of the College.

In summer, there were fresh conflicts and fresh delights. I did not, indeed, play tennis, because my dear mother thought it was unladylike—it would have been absurd, of course, to play College matches in skirts! But I played cricket fairly regularly; and I am not ashamed to be thought old-fashioned when I say that there was a good deal of fun to be got out of the game. It was slow, I admit (not so slow, perhaps, as when my great-grandfather used to play it in a top-hat!), but there were exciting moments when the scores were nearly equal, and sometimes plenty of exercise. But I confess that I preferred the river, although I was never a rowing woman. They were great evenings, when you would take down your dinner in a picnic basket to Timms' boat-house, and launch your frail motor-punt just as the soft chimes of Keble struck eight o'clock; when, some half-an-hour later,

you would find that you had got beyond the houses and the press of craft, and would tether " the old 'bus " to a willow, and bathe, and spread out your dinner on the mown grass ; when, the dinner cleared and the cigars lighted, you would float home again downstream to the gentle music of a hundred distant gramophones, and think, who knows what thoughts ? under the velvet skies of the June evening.

But, more important than all these busy idlenesses of Oxford life, I began to find myself at this time as a public speaker. Juliet Savage had early joined all the clubs she could hear of : I never knew a woman who had such a passion for the exchange of opinions. It was through her instigation that I joined, besides several College Clubs, the Curzon, the Dynamiters, and the $x+1$'s. (Of course I belonged to the Union : at the time of which I am writing, anybody of British parentage could get in without even paying an entrance fee.) The Curzon was a very select Tory club, founded a short while earlier owing to a schism in the Canning : a bare majority, who contrived, however, to keep the club funds and the Lygon Cup, refusing admission to my indignant sex. It was full of time-honoured institutions, such as taking a pinch of snuff before you began your speech (which always made me cough rather), and singing " Down among the Dead Men " in chorus before we broke up—never did we do this so lustily as one evening when the " senseless, woman-hating crew " of the original Canning were meeting on the same staircase (in Univ., I think it was), and had to be given the full benefit of our opinions.

The Dynamiters had one custom which was, I suppose, unique. At each meeting, one of the members was chosen by lot to murder the Vice-Chancellor, and had to report at the next meeting on the attempt made and the reasons for its failure. Apart from this, it was simply a home of rather *démodé* revolutionary talk, with a foreign element in it so strong that I once introduced a motion to have French talked at the debates. It proved, however, that our German comrades had not enough of the international spirit to tolerate the proposal. The $x+1$'s were, I must admit, a more interesting Society. There was no reason whatever for their being so called. They debated literary questions mostly, not without acumen, but with a rather painful striving after originality. Thus, one member would try to resuscitate the dead laurels of Tennyson; another would condemn Masefield as a mawkish sentimentalist, another would write in disproof of the existence of Dr. Johnson. The most characteristic note of the Society was its repudiation of all the courtesies of debate. The President always opened the proceedings by saying that it was his unpleasant duty to allow Mr. So-and-so to read his paper, on the hackneyed subject of So-and-so; he could only hope that it would be as brief as possible. When the paper was ended, the Secretary would rise, and remonstrate with the honourable member for having read so uninterestingly, and would proceed to move a vote of censure on him, which was solemnly carried. In speaking, if you referred to anyone who had addressed the House before you, you were bound to mention him by reference to some physical

defect, or unpleasant personal characteristic, as " the honourable member who forgot to shave this morning," or " the honourable member whose ears are so much too large for her," and so on. At the conclusion of the proceedings, a vote of censure was passed on all the officers. The President then rose, and proposed the dissolution of the Society ; the Treasurer seconded, and the motion was carried *nem. con.* I do not know why we enjoyed it, but we did. Alas, one begins to discover even as an undergraduate that man's most violent innovations turn almost at once into a sort of archaic ritual.

The Union, of course, was a more serious affair : of this Society I had the honour to be the first woman President. We had some fine speakers in those days, notably Eustace Travers, who afterwards became a very successful book-maker, and Arthur Cardman, who as Lord Bythorpe did so much to improve the breed of Herefordshire cattle. But this was long after the days of real Union eloquence, the days of Raymond Asquith and Humphrey Paul. The most notable debate at which I was ever present was that at which the proposal for Indian Home Rule was discussed, only six months before it was carried into effect. Indians in those days used to come to Oxford in large numbers, and the front benches were parted by an absolute division of colour, " looking," Savage said to me, " just like those advertisements of stuff to dye your white hair with, only the chap in the picture has only tried it on one side for a start." Lord Cheadle was the guest of the evening, and I imagined, as I looked at his bowed shoulders and untidy white hair, and listened to his voice, still silvery

in quality though lacking its old fire, how those tones must have thrilled the Commons at the time of the Five Years' War. The excitement was intense throughout the evening: every sentence of Lord Cheadle was cheered to the echo, and the very dons in the gallery shook their fists when his Nationalist opponent appealed for her fellow-countrymen. The voting, as usual, went against the visitor, and we had the satisfaction of feeling that the Oxford Union had once more dictated its policy to the Government.

It must not be supposed that, because I was so multifariously occupied, I was neglecting my chances in the Schools. I had decided to take as my subject for Finals the group known as Group 65B, which consisted of Geography and Byzantine Architecture, with French as a subsidiary subject. I sat once more at the feet of the great Hoskyns, and was privileged to attend the very first lecture to which he released his considerations on "Whereness examined as such, without reference to spatial conceptions, with special allusion to the recently discovered work of Aristotle on *Πονότης*." He followed this up with a course (I have the notes of it still) called "Towards a reconciliation of Teleology with Geography, with some remarks on the Where as a function of the Why." Alas, it was after my time that he startled the world with his "The Whence as an aspect of the Whither, a point Einstein overlooked." In fact, he had not yet made his name, but he had one fervent devotee. So enthralled was I by his speculations that I made a suggestion that I should come and take private classes with him at his house: when difficulties arose, I

actually consented to come without receiving the usual fee. Never shall I forget the thrill of those evenings! It was something of a pilgrimage that I had taken on myself, for he lived in one of the most fashionable streets of Boar's Hill, and this was before the funicular railway had been electrified. At the end of our fourth class, however, he proposed marriage, a suggestion which so took me aback that I put him off with the plea (an unusual one, even then) that I must write for my parents' consent. My mother was very busy at the time, since she was entering her dog for a show, and my father found it impossible to get away. The result was unexpected, but perhaps fortunate, a visit from old Miss Linthorpe! She interviewed Charles Hoskyns for three quarters of an hour, and came away saying that the man ought to be in Bedlam (a melancholy prophecy of what happened later on). The engagement was broken off, but I promised that I would always be a sister to him, and when he married his typist a few months later, suggested further that I would be a sister-in-law to his wife.

My researches in Byzantine architecture were less absorbing; it was a subject more difficult to treat in a theoretical aspect. I went to Church at St. Barnabas' one Sunday, to collect local colour, but the expedition was not a success. That Church had been one of the earliest to acclaim and to encourage rapprochement with the Greek Orthodox Communion, and I found that, during the week, an enormous screen had been erected in the middle of the Church, completely hiding the Eastern portion of it. The screen, indeed, had doors in

it, which were meant (I afterwards learnt) to be thrown open at various points in the service ; but unfortunately these doors jammed on this first occasion, and the congregation had to be content without seeing the officiating clergy at all.

I hope it will not be thought to argue defective piety in me that I have, so far, said nothing about the religious state of the University. I am sorry to say that I think the women who were up in my time were, on the whole, far better Churchgoers than their successors of to-day. The old idea of compulsory chapels had disappeared almost before the Five Years' War ; and there was now no worldly inducement to keep even Sunday chapels except that those who went on Sunday evening were not charged for their dinner afterwards in Hall. In spite of the purely voluntary character of these services, I think we had nearly always about a third of the College in attendance ; and very heartily, I remember, did they join in the singing. Miss Garvice, our principal, used to conduct the service, and would occasionally preach us a lay sermon : she always refused, however, to pronounce the Absolution ; the assumption of anything like priestly powers by women in the present state of feeling, she said, could do no good and might possibly do harm. We used the ordinary Prayer Book service, but, in virtue of a special privilege accorded to us by our visitor, the Bishop of Sodor and Man, we altered the masculine gender to the feminine wherever it occurred in any general connexion : " When the wicked woman turneth away from her wickedness," and so on.

Our devotion to the services of the Church at St. Lucy's was but part of a great religious movement throughout the University. In those days, the Sunday evening sermons for undergraduates which are now preached at St. Peter's-in-the-East were still preached at St. Mary's, and when a really popular orator such as the then Bishop of Plymouth was to occupy the pulpit, you did well to be in time for the opening prayers if you wanted to make sure of a seat. I remember an atheist meeting, which was being held opposite the moving platform in St. Giles', where the old Martyrs' Memorial used to stand, being almost broken up by a set of Magdalen undergraduates who were returning from the Bullingdon dinner. When the Archbishop of British Guiana was given his honorary degree (I was in the theatre myself), there was no larking among the undergraduates in the gallery, except that one young man threw down a black and only partially clothed "Golliwog" in his direction—an action which the *Oxford Magazine* criticized afterward as being in doubtful taste. Altogether, our young friends at Oxford might do worse than go back to the religious standard of the early thirties.

No one man can be more reasonably credited with having brought about this state of things than Canon Dives of Christ Church. It is not easy, of course, from the Catholic point of view to sympathize with his difficulties or to rest satisfied with his affirmations. But in those days he was a tower of strength to many weak hearts. I remember attending a meeting of the Oxford University Churches Reunion in the J.C.R. at

Worcester, to which he read his famous " Explanation of the Existence of Good." I felt it to be so remarkable a feat that I kept the notes of it, of which I give an abstract. Evil, he said, was an undeniable fact in our experience. The phenomenon of pain, which some short-sighted philosophers had attempted to deny, was sufficiently attested for us by the " fugitive reaction " which it set up in Man and even, apparently, in the lower animals. " If I am kicked on the shin," he explained with his dry humour, " my instinct is to put my shin elsewhere." A very little reflection would show us that the parallel phenomenon known as " Moral " evil had an equally real existence. " If I see a man kicking a baby on the shin, my instinct is to remonstrate with him." He then drew a lurid picture of all the moral evil that went on in the world : even in those days, it was a damning indictment ! " Now, gentlemen," he continued, in that curious little shriek that was so characteristic of his pulpit delivery, " no Evil without Good ! Evil cannot exist without implying the existence of its correlative ! If you, gentlemen," (beaming at us through his spectacles) " are to be at liberty to do wrong, you must *ipso facto* leave me my liberty to do right. You will tell me that, on this showing, Good has only a parasitic, and almost a negative existence. Be it so ; it exists. And now, how are we to account for its existence ? " He went on to show, in a really eloquent passage, that Evil can only realize itself fully if and in so far as it finds itself in a continual struggle against Good ; that Good is, consequently, necessary to the constitution of the world,

which demands Evil as a condition of its fulfilment. "Some day, perhaps," he added, "wiser heads and clearer vision than yours or mine will be able to include Evil and Good under a Higher Synthesis which shall co-ordinate and subsume them both. Meanwhile, we struggle on in the half-light of our uncertainty, only confident that the Power (for so, I think we may call it) which has instilled into our natures such an irresistible craving for what is evil, will somehow, somewhere, bring that evil to fulfilment." The roof of the J.C.R. echoed again as we testified by our grateful plaudits our gratitude to Canon Dives for his courageous utterance.

But it must not be imagined that our whole time at Oxford was spent in these serious occupations! We had our relaxations, too, and wherever innocent fun was going, you may be sure that the undergraduates of St. Lucy's had their part. No less than five of us, I remember, were included in the caste of "Oh, blast it all" when it was performed by the O.U.D.S. in the Lent term of 1936. I came on myself in the Mixed Bathing scene, and again at the end of the Fourth Act, where the male and female choruses come out of the Noah's Ark in pairs, in fancy dress. We had the opportunity of seeing most of the successful revues at the Theatre, some of them when they had only been running three years or so on the London stage. Occasionally (for the Proctors were very strict about the management of the theatre) we had to vary the entertainment with the old classical stage of Pinero and Brandon Thomas.

It was in the Eights Week of my last year (1938) that the St. Lucy's boat went up into the First Division,

beating Merton II. It was true that Merton I had now been head of the river five years in succession, and some thought that they sacrificed the prospects of their second boat to those of their first, but it was, nevertheless, a memorable triumph. There was bad blood between the rowing and the football sets at the time, because the football semi-final had been reported in the *St. Lucy's Chronicle* in a way that we all thought odious. But it was not a time for narrow, sectarian grudges; and we all turned out in our football skirts and our blue-and-gold-edged "perspirers" to watch the race from the towing path. The habit of putting on "change" to watch the races was merely a survival, ever since the towing path had been turned into a moving platform, but it was a ritual rigorously observed. How we shouted, as the nose of the St. Lucy's boat gradually gained upon our Herculean antagonists, and bumped them just opposite the Lady Margaret barge! There were great doings in the College that night, and we broke three of the library windows.

But meanwhile the shadow of Schools was drawing nearer, and there was little time left for such frivolities. I knew that I was sound on my texts, and my tutress warned me to take it easy toward the end. I went away for three days before the examination—to Ascot, where I made some good selections. The examination itself filled me with despair: the weather was thunderous and the heat of the room excessive. I even went so far as to write on one of my papers: "TO THE EXAMINER.—I could have done this question much better if the woman in front of me were not using such a

noisy typewriter." My " viva " was a short and purely informal one; they asked me the whereabouts of Tonkin, which I located, in the embarrassment of the moment, in Lancashire. But when the lists came out in September I found my own name among the first class, and made history once more as the first woman who had ever made good in Byzantine architecture.

## CHAPTER IV

## TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT

Only in travel do we find rest. For our world is a moving platform, and he who would mark time must run—certainly he must run.—Dr. Dives: *Abraham the Pedestrian.*

THE choice of a profession, which naturally began to exercise me when I had gone down, was not at that time at all an easy one. The effect of Indian Home Rule had been, not only to disappoint many who had aspired to the Indian Civic Service, but to send home from India a whole host of Europeans who had lost their positions there and were now in search of employment. The field was consequently narrowed. Canon Dives was very urgent with me to take Holy Orders. "It is just your sort we want," he was kind enough to say: "people who have stripped Life of its mysteries and looked Truth in the face." I objected that I felt disqualified on theological grounds: my geographical training had taught me that what is nowhere is nothing, and the idea of a Supreme Being who was ubiquitous affronted my intelligence. Could I, then, honestly take the pay of a Church which taught the existence of a God, when I myself believed in nothing of the sort? He was quite unshaken in his opinion. "After all," he said, "relativity is in the air, and we are coming to realize, I think, that all truth is

relative to the person who believes it. To preach to a congregation of orthodox people and bid them live up to their lights is not necessarily the work of one who is herself an orthodox believer. Besides, you would not get much pay at first. And, as time went on, you might well find that your own ideas would come to frame themselves in a more traditional setting." I thus very nearly became a deaconess (it was not, of course, till nearly twenty years later that women could attain any higher rank in the ministry). But family opposition (" My dear," said Miss Linthorpe, " you'd run off with the examining chaplain ") combined with my absence of any definite religious convictions to prevent it. There was some talk of my going into my father's business, but its prospects were still far from reassuring, and my mother urged, with some common sense, that it would be a mistake to have all our eggs in one basket. And then the authorities at St. Lucy's solved the difficulty by obtaining for me, as the result of my geographical successes, a travelling scholarship which, on condition of my residing abroad, would make it unnecessary for me to think further about my career for the next two years.

I travelled by train. The aeroplane had not then come to its own, even for long journeys. A series of accidents in the five previous years, not traceable to any one cause, but simply one of those runs of bad luck which mere observation cannot but detect in the nature of things, had made the public nervous and the insurance premiums prohibitive. On the other side, the American Trust which had just taken over the main

arteries of Continental Travel—one hardly hears it spoken of now, or only in the same breath with the Darien Canal and the South Sea Company, but to us the Belgium to Bosphorus Trunk Railway was the latest achievement of the human genius—had undoubtedly revolutionized the train journey. The continuous cinema performances, even if you did not patronize them yourself, at least drew off from you the importunate infants that are the bane of the railway carriages (Juliet Savage profanely said that when she went by train she always prayed " Deliver me, O Lord, from the hands of strange children "). Wireless installations and a tape machine made it possible to keep in touch with the news of the world at large. The libraries paid their way, although they were said to reckon on a loss of about £5 by thefts every journey! I believe billiard-players complained of the motion, even the very slight motion which the patent springs had not managed to eliminate, but for myself I always found Badminton made a better game when you had the swing of the train under you to complicate the problem of keeping your feet. With all these amenities, we did not trouble about speed (these *trains de luxe* only averaged about thirty miles an hour), and the pleasant days passed all too quickly on them. Well, it was another item added to the great list of human follies! And yet it is good discipline for the soul to have seen many such and to have outlived them.

With such leisurely progress I visited, during the latter part of '38 and almost the whole of '39, the principal centres of that mid-European republic which we now

call Magiria, but which still went, at the time of my visit, by the name of Mittel-Europa. I went from Geneva to Munich, from Munich to Innsbruck, from Innsbruck to Vienna, from Vienna to Bayreuth and Prague, from Prague to Buda-Pest, from Buda-Pest back to Dresden and Leipzig, from Leipzig to Mainz, and so back again to Basle, without crossing a frontier, having my luggage examined, or being asked to produce a passport—I got tired of counting how often I must have submitted to such nuisances if I had done the same journey ten years earlier. I was not a mere sight-seer; I had a purpose in view. Although a travelling scholarship did not entail any conditions as to how you should occupy your time, there was still a feeling that you ought to produce, when it lapsed, a thesis of some sort to justify your intellectual existence. For myself, I determined to write a monograph, which I subsequently published and which gained me honorary admission to the Royal Geographical Society, on the constitution and the general conditions of life which I had observed in the then quite new country of Mittel-Europa. I hope my readers will not accuse me of unnecessary vanity if I print here some few paragraphs from it, which are not, after all, without their interest: it is instructive to read, at this distant date, the estimate which an impartial observer could then form of the prospects of that unique state, which had not then passed, as it has since passed triumphantly, the test of more than fifty years' untroubled permanence.

"Twenty years ago, when the break-up of the ramshackle Empire of Austria-Hungary had brought

into being a whole welter of incompetent states, at variance with one another and in themselves, at the very heart of Europe, it would have seemed well-nigh impossible that a single stroke of statesmanship should, in so brief a compass of time, solve all their problems and unite them afresh, this time upon acceptable terms and upon a real, living basis of common interest. Austria itself, shorn of its seaboard and apparently destitute of all hope of self-development; Hungary with its unquiet political agitations; Czecho-Slovakia with its national, its constitutional, its religious dissensions; Bavaria and Saxony, still loosely attached to the German confederation, yet ready upon the slightest pretext to part company with their uncongenial neighbours—it would have seemed impossible, a mere Utopian dream, that all these units should be merged in a single Republic, by the far-seeing genius, not of a politician, not of a religious leader, not of a national hero, but of a Tourists' Agency—and that agency one which had its centre neither in Vienna nor in Prague nor in Munich, but—*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*—in the busy thoroughfare of Ludgate Circus.

"The old Republic of Switzerland was of course the model, as it consented to become the nucleus, of this vast political experiment. Here were people of three different races—French, German, and Italian—people who not only differed, but had in time past differed even to blood, in their religious outlook, living together in perfect harmony and unparalleled prosperity. The Swiss character is not naturally pacific; on the con-

trary, in the late Middle Ages the Swiss were the most venal and the most savage mercenaries to be obtained in Europe : yet the little Republic not only kept itself clear, poorly armed as it was, from the turmoil of the Great War,[1] but laboured, not unsuccessfully, to draw the combatants together and to invite exchanges of opinion. Further, its prosperity seemed in no way diminished by the fact that it had no seaboard and depended upon the goodwill of its more powerful neighbours for the whole maintenance of its import and export trade. What could be the secret of this phenomenon on the political horizon, this living disproof of all our most cherished theories as to the conditions which guarantee the unity and the well-being of a nation ?

" The answer to this enigma was already known in Ludgate Circus. The Swiss prospered as they did because they were a nation of hotel-keepers. Hotel-keepers, by the very nature of their profession, are bound to keep the peace as far as possible not only with but among their neighbours. They are bound to avoid even the threat or the appearance of strikes and disturbances in their own country, for fear of awaking panic in the hearts of those maiden ladies who are their chief patronesses. Hotel-keepers are not troubled by any petty differences of religion or nationality, so long as they are united in a common endeavour to make money out of the foreigner. Hotel-keepers, finally, do not trouble about a seaboard—any sort of board is good enough for them. It followed that there was

[1] Meaning, of course, the Five Years' War.

only one remedy to apply to the distracted politics of Middle Europe. A larger Switzerland must be formed, which should contain as many as possible of the important tourists' resorts, and must be organized on the Swiss model, to constitute a solid block of pacific influence, bound together by an indissoluble bond of common commercial interest, which should extend from the South of the Rhineland to the very gates of Galicia.

"It is amazing to see, as one travels about the country, how the lesser difficulties which at first sight seemed likely to attend the scheme solved themselves on the general principles which guided its promoters. Thus, the religious question, which had been acute in several of the old states, gave no further trouble when it was understood that the state would pay for the unkeep of all Church buildings by a *pro rata* grant, proportional to the number of foreign travellers who had visited each in the course of the last census period. The old political divisions of the whole area were obliterated, and replaced by a new division based on railway facilities; when exception was taken to the use of the word 'cantons,' as implying that the Swiss system had overrun its natural boundaries, it was decided that these new geographical units should go by the name of 'coupons.' Once it was realized that the whole nation had only a single aim, viz. the exploitation of the foreigner, all democratic institutions speedily disappeared, and the present Senate was set up, consisting of the proprietors of those hotels which are marked with a star in Baedeker's Guide. Taxes were

abolished, and replaced by a five per cent. duty on all commissions and tips. The army was disbanded; for it was rightly argued that there was no danger of friction with foreign nations: if they have grievances to ventilate, they are requested to communicate direct with Ludgate Circus. The language problem was solved by the introduction of American as the official language of the State; the exchange difficulty, which had threatened to strangle the commercial life of Central Europe, was easily met by the self-sacrificing policy of the Agency. The Agency retains very real rights as a power behind the throne, but in no way obtrudes itself on the notice of the people at large; and if the policemen, customs officers, etc., have the distinguishing initials T.C. on their caps, this is only because they create confidence in the mind of the traveller.

"Mittel-Europa has, of course, no diplomatic service; nor does she, except for the Papal Nuncio, admit any foreign representatives. Yet she looms large in the Councils of Europe, and the League of Nations is even now holding—we trust, not unfruitfully—its 218th session at Ober-Ammergau. Her exports are enormous, consisting chiefly of paper-knives, crucifixes, picture-postcards, and unclaimed baggage. Her Parliament meets only once a year, during the months of July, August, and September, not in a single, fixed capital, but in a series of cities taken in rotation—this was, of course, at one time the custom in our own country, when men could speak of the Parliament of Oxford, the Parliament of Gloucester, and so on. The city in which the Parliament is to meet for that year is, of

course, for that year the Mecca of all the principal 'personally conducted tours' from this country and from the United States, and the proceeds of these tours ordinarily serve to defray the whole expenses of the members. There are no effective political parties, though there is naturally a certain amount of rivalry between the various local interests, debate occasionally becoming acrimonious on the respective salubrity of the various health-resorts : in general, however, every one is permitted to say what he will of his own department or 'coupon,' provided that he does not explicitly disparage the amenities of any other. Crime is practically unknown there ; the majority of the criminal classes have abandoned theft as being less lucrative than the normal occupations of their fellow-countrymen.

"It is greatly to be hoped that in the event of another European War the central position of Mittel-Europa would have a powerful influence in putting a speedy end to the conflict. It would clearly be impossible for the Republic to take sides with either belligerent, since it would immediately strangle all its industries by doing so. Being neutral, it would necessarily interpose a barrier between any two great powers who were trying to fly at one another's throats. It is true that this ideal has only been imperfectly realized, since the suggestion of including the whole Rhine country, with parts of Alsace-Lorraine, within the boundaries of the new state, was negatived by France, always suspicious of unfriendly motives : an equally intransigent attitude was, most unfortunately, observed by Poland. But

even within its lesser confines Mittel-Europa cannot fail to be an influence for good."

Such was my impression of the situation at the time: and those who remember the incidents of the Great War—how it was Magiria which very nearly prevented the declaration of war in 1972, how Magirian ambassadors were everywhere the natural protectors of the neutral interest, how, finally, it was on Magirian soil, at Zürich, that the Peace Conference met in 1975—will not be disposed to quarrel with the accuracy of my estimate. The rest of my paper would not be of much interest to modern readers; but I will add some private reminiscences in the form of extracts from my diary, which will not, I hope, seem out of place: Mittel-Europa was, then as since, a great meeting-ground for the fashionable world of all countries, and it will easily be imagined that, fresh from the almost conventual seclusion of my life at Challow and at Oxford, I missed no opportunity of extending my acquaintance and improving my knowledge of men and manners during my time abroad.

* * * * *

Nuremberg, December 26, 1939. Yesterday, Christmas Day, was solemnly kept by all classes in the town; even the Socialists flying their flag half-mast and in many cases going about in mourning. To church in the morning at St. Sebald's (I find St. Laurence's has been given back to the Catholics); we heard a most eloquent lay sermon from one of the Senators, who is a rich hotel-proprietor in the town. He preached on Home-love, of which instinct he said, rather arbitrarily

I thought, that the Christus-myth was an objective-becoming. He grew quite eloquent over the lack of accommodation at Bethlehem recorded in the Gospel, and plainly implied that it was the sort of thing which would not be allowed to happen nowadays. He said he was glad to be able to preach about home-love, since he saw so many people in church who were clearly exiled for the moment from their native country; it was, however, he said, the object of the Government to make us all feel as much at home as possible. Immediately after Church went to an enormous Christmas dinner given by the manager of our hotel, to which most of the notabilities of the town and several distinguished foreigners had been invited. The dinner lasted from twelve noon on Christmas Day till two o'clock this morning.

I sat next to one of the new nobility, the Landgrab von Fleissing. He said he was a great reader of English poetry, especially Byron and Mrs. Wilcox: I said neither of them were ever read in England nowadays, and he seemed disappointed; so I asked him whether he read Kipling, which was a fortunate shot: he said "The Beast-mark" was his favourite story. I found he came from Prague, so asked him whether he was a Catholic. He said no, he belonged to the State Church, which broke away from the Catholics in 1920, because they demanded a vernacular liturgy and a married clergy. I asked whether he approved of the married clergy, and he said no, because they did not believe in religion: for himself, he was pious, and thought it was stupid not to believe in God. I ex-

plained something of my own doubts, to which he only replied, "Ah, you English, you are so big you get along without him."

On the other side of me was a Russian, whose name I could not catch: he was very proud of his country, which was, he said, the first revolutionary country, and was still a sort of model of revolution to all others. He was very rich, and kept four motor-cars. When I expressed surprise about this, he explained that communism did not mean an equal sharing of all possessions by all the people, but a free opportunity for men's natural powers of leadership to come out. (I was told afterwards that his came out in the form of holding up a supply of wheat, for which, my informant added, he would certainly have been lynched in America.) He was very enthusiastic about education, which naturally interested me, and I asked him what sort of curriculum the children went through in the elementary schools. He said they learned not to respect the nobility, not to believe in God, not to love their wives, not to obey their parents, not to join the army, and many, many other things. I said it all sounded rather negative, but he could not understand this word; so I said I did not understand why people needed to be *taught* such things, but he could not see this.

The room got very hot towards the end of the proceedings. We sang Auld Lang Syne before we separated. We go back to Munich to-morrow.

Vienna, June 24, 1939. I met one of the greatest doctors here at a dance, and he danced so badly that I

sat out with him and talked hard to prevent him wanting to go back to the ball-room. He said I ought to go and see the patients at the great Hospital of Rest, where there was a new treatment being tried; you had to sit in a series of draughts, which were carefully graduated so as to get stronger and stronger. It was a wonderful thing, especially for rheumatism. There was another cure which meant that you had to be coated with tar all over. I asked whether they made any charge for admission to see these patients, and he said yes, unless I had got one of the new "Go-everywhere" coupons. I asked whether the psycho-analysts were still strong among the medical faculty, and he said he thought their influence was declining. They had declared that all music was demoralizing, and that had made trouble with the Senators at Bayreuth. They had also wanted to kill all pet dogs.

Bayreuth, August 3, 1939. Almost the first thing we did when we got here was to go to the much-advertised "continuous performance" of the "Ring." So far as the music was concerned, I simply proved once more the mendacity of the friends who always tell you you don't have to be musical to appreciate Wagner—not a note of it meant anything to me. And, though the scenery was certainly gorgeous, the whole thing seemed to me over-acted, especially in the amount of facial expression the actors found it necessary to put in. But what enthralled me was the merely *mechanical* triumph of the whole thing; never for one moment did the cinema-operator get out of time with the gramophone; of course if he had the effect would

have lowered the dignity of the whole performance. It was wonderful to watch how the devotees sat there silent, hour after hour; I had one old gentleman pointed out to me who attends every day from nine to one, and again from half-past two to half-past six. It was impossible not to be impressed. With my "Go-everywhere" coupon I was allowed to look behind the scenes, and the gramophone was certainly marvellous. It is said to be the largest in the world, and I could easily have stood up in the mouth of the funnel. There is a story of a cinema-operator who was so worried at having got the pictures *one bar out* that he went home and shot himself—they are a marvellous people. We also went to the Wagner Mausoleum, where they have continuous lectures on the operas. An old professor, whose name I did not catch, brought forward various reasons, which I did not understand, for believing that Parsifal was written with some special political object, whose nature I cannot remember.

Buda-Pest, September 18, 1939. I was introduced to the great Hungarian novelist, Myslok. He asked me how many of his works I had read; I said none. As he seemed disappointed, I added that I had recently had to spend most of my time reading geography. "Geography!" he said. "What is that? It is only the science of the earth, and what is earth? Only one big piece of dirt"—he pronounced the word with great emphasis and contempt. I was rather nettled, and said I supposed at that rate geography was very much the same as reading modern novels. He asked me which of his characters I liked best: I said I had not

read any of his works. He said that was very strange, because they had all been translated into English. I said I always found translations of foreign books dull reading; somehow the thing altered so much in the process. He agreed with me enthusiastically, and said that when his last novel was translated the English publisher had insisted on cutting out the part where the hero (I forget his name now) trampled on the heroine because he did not like her dress. I was feeling rather vague and inattentive, and asked, "Did it kill her?" He said no, but she limped like a crab all the rest of the book. He then asked if I did not think this the finest book he had ever written. I said I had not had the pleasure of reading any of his works. He then asked me to call on him, but he looks so dreadfully like poor Mr. Hoskyns that I really don't think I can.

Mainz, November 2, 1939. There is a great Congress of Food Reformers going on here, and the hotel-keepers are in despair. Our waiter told us that we were the only people in the hotel who would take the table d'hôte, and even of the diners *à la carte* three complained that they were starving owing to a shortage of their favourite diet. Dates, he said, were what they wanted mostly, and all the dates in the town had been sold out long since. "Why they not go hold blinking Congress in the Sahara?" he said, polishing the plates furiously. We went to a lecture on the nutritive qualities of the locust, which I had always hitherto regarded as a sort of *pis aller*, and I am afraid I came away unconverted. Any number of journalists were

present, and we asked the waiter afterwards whether they did not help out the cuisine rather; but he said they took nothing except beer.

* * * * *

These, I am afraid, are only selections from the faded old leaves of my foreign diary, and they are not even representative selections—I seem to have thought a great deal about clothes in those days, and a good deal about young men. I had two proposals, one in Munich and one in Prague, but I managed to get rid of my suitors without invoking the aid of old Miss Linthorpe. It was the news of her dangerous illness that called me back to England before my time was really up. I arrived at home quite unexpected; my father, I remember, greeted me on the door-step with "Hullo, Opal! I've been round in 81."

## CHAPTER V

## ON THE SICK LIST

More soda-water, and more dry toast?
Let me up, you damned saw-bones!
W. S. Simcox: *The Death-rattle.*

MISS LINTHORPE died about three weeks later. I suppose even the most selfish of us can look back at one or two really "good deeds" they have put in during the course of their lives; and I must say I think the old lady died the happier for my attendance at her bedside. I found, when I reached her house in Sloane Gardens, that they had called in a young doctor, passionately interested in mind-curing, whose method chiefly consisted of sitting in her room for an hour or so at a time, not talking to her much, but just, as he said, "keeping up her vitality." The first words she whispered to me as I bent down to kiss her were, "My dear, do get rid of that death's-head; he depresses me *beyond* words." I managed somehow to dispose of him, and as he shut the door behind him—not gently but with a loud bang, no doubt by way of keeping up her vitality—my aunt actually fumbled at the side of her bed and brought out her familiar lorgnettes; then, fixing his imaginary figure with that devastating stare of hers, "Why do I have to pay to be attended by a man who hasn't even

got the sense to see that I'm dying, when I can see it for myself? I suppose he thinks death is some kind of sexual abnormality. Now, my dear, I want you to be very kind, and call in Dr. Matheson—Hodges will give you the address. He's a rotten doctor, I believe, but I'd sooner be killed off by one of my own generation. One gets these fads, you know."

So Miss Linthorpe had the services of her old, comfortable doctor: nor was she less exacting in the case of her solicitor; nor, I need hardly say, in the case of her clergyman. He had to come from a church several parishes off: "It's a dingy sort of hole, and the services there always send me to sleep; but they've no stunts there, if you understand what I mean; they don't turn out in fresh clothes every week, or make up the service as they go along." I doubt if he did much for her, and indeed she confided to me that she would look a pretty sort of fool in heaven if all *he* said was true. But she got her way, and she could bear anything as long as she got her way. It was the same clergyman who attended her coffin to the grave-side, and read the funeral service. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" . . . it was part of a dead world we laid to rest at the West Drayton cemetery, but you felt that there, if indeed she was anywhere, her old prejudices would be more respected, and her odd ways less out of place.

It touched me profoundly, and at the same time took me seriously aback, when I found that the old lady had left me her sole heir. She had also, quite at the end of her life, entrusted to her solicitor a sealed packet which

was to be delivered to me personally, or failing that to be destroyed unread. I do not know what strange freak induced my aunt to plunge suddenly into authorship ; but the envelope proved to contain nothing more than her reflections on life, with a few general bits of advice which she offered to me on the strength of it. I have it before me as I type (Miss Linthorpe to her dying day would never use a typewriter) : a few extracts, which I do not hesitate to print, will show the general character of it.

My dear Opal,

*When you grow old (as you probably will, for my family are long-lived, and the Winterheads are a healthy stock, because they think so little), you will have passed through an experience which now lies a good long way back in my life, but which will perhaps come to you later. I mean the moment when one drops out of the movement that goes on in one's generation : it is just like dropping out of a competition, the same mixture of disappointment and relief. You will find that you have suddenly stood still, when you had no idea that you had been moving, like getting off one of these murderous moving platforms when you're not thinking. You will have turned from a competitor in life into a spectator, and your first thought will be that everything round you changes, and changes very rapidly. But this, since it is not a very original thought, you will probably keep to yourself.*

*The next thing you will notice is that the change is of two kinds : there is a change which is involuntary on mankind's part, and a change which is deliberate. All*

*the progress of science, whether practical or speculative, is involuntary. We shall not go back to horses, nor to candles, nor to sewing-machines. And although all the theories of all these silly scientists are not (thank God!) eternal, but appear to go round in cycles, so that I am old enough to remember the days when they thought consumption was not infectious (or do I mean contagious?) and that there was no such person as Homer, yet it's only fair to say that they do learn from their mistakes; they go up blind alleys, but they have the decency to blaze the trail behind them, so that their posterity shan't make just the same kind of fools of themselves. And I suppose it's true that as our scientific apparatus gets better, we come to depend on it more and grow physically inferior in consequence—I can say this with some pride, since I am sixty-nine and haven't a tooth in my head that God didn't put there.*[1] *But nobody is going to avoid all that, and I never heard that anybody except Ruskin thought you could.*

*The lie you will find people telling all around you—and telling it without realizing that it is a lie, which makes it so much worse, as Plato says—is that the great movements of the human mind, whether in the arts or in politics or in morals or in religion, are similarly part of an irresistible progress; so that you could never go back on our present attitude of mind about (say) marriage any more than you could go back to sewing-machines. The truth is, of course, that the great movements of the human mind are just*

[1] Miss Linthorpe's record did not seem so extraordinary then as it would now; even as late as the fifties I remember a few young men of thirty or thirty-five who had still some of their own teeth left.

*fashions. The reason why you don't admire Whistler is just the same as the reason why you don't wear elastic-sided boots. And it's so with bigger things than that; generally it's a catchword that starts the whole thing—look at Evolution! Look at what a bogy it was to our fathers'—I mean, to my father's—generation: how all the clergymen went about thinking the world was coming to an end and wondering where their next collection was coming from: and all the dons tried to work evolution into their subjects, and pretend that they had detected it there long before they ever heard of Darwin, and the politicians—oh, Lord! And now where is it? It outlived crinolines, which it never deserved to, but it hasn't outlived jumpers. You'll see, it'll be just the same with this relativity nonsense every one is talking about. They're fashions, these things; it isn't that any one person sits down and says, "Now, let's all think like this": it's a collective impetus, as that bore Canon Dives would say. You'll live through it.*

*I wish I knew what it all meant. But I think this: I think it is the result of man being born immortal, and thinking (like an ass) that he has only this world to satisfy his immortal instinct with. Despairing of immortality in this world, and forgetting it in the next, he makes the human race the immortal unit, and so endows it with life. And, because he has been told that life means growth, he cannot be happy until he believes that the world in which he lives is growing, from something to something else. That is human vanity's favourite dogma, and there is no atom of proof for it. Everything we know about history and natural history shows that there is a kind of progress in*

*the world which is a progress from the less to the more complicated, from the less to the more organized : nothing suggests, except to our vanity, that there is a progress from the worse to the better—and what other kind of progress would any sensible person give a tinker's curse for? That's it, I believe. Sweating away on the treadmill, humanity fancies that it is mountaineering, and that the dawn is just going to show above the next slope. There's an epigram for you. Let me finish now, before I spoil it. . . .*

The rest of Miss Linthorpe's statement, though equally curious, was entirely private. I am afraid I have got well past her age without ever acquiring her truculent directness of thought and of expression. But I sometimes hope she was right.

Meanwhile, it looked for a short time, for a few months after her death, as if I was to defeat all her prophecies of my longevity. I got into the doctor's hands ; and it must be remembered that in those days, when doctors were not paid by results, but were allowed to charge what they liked for various kinds of treatment which might prove wholly unsuccessful, it was more easy to get into the doctors' hands than to get out of them. More particularly, since this was just the crisis of the conflict between the physicist and the psychicist schools of medicine, and a person of decent means (as I now found myself) was not easily satisfied until she had tried all that either branch could do towards a cure of the malady. It is clear to me now—I shall not enter into the symptoms, for reasons which will readily be

understood—that I was suffering from a comparatively mild attack of Hilton's disease, the very nature of which was then only dimly suspected, while no steps had been taken at all towards the discovery of a remedy for it. Nowadays the doctors would have known what to do with me, and if my system had responded properly to treatment I should have been well again in six weeks. At the time, the very difficulty of diagnosis left me a prey to every conceivable theory which the physician of the moment might be trying to verify or to popularize.

It began in a sufficiently curious way. It was not common then for girls of twenty-five or so to get engaged : we held that a girl ought to make a living for herself and have something to settle down upon before she looked about for a partner in life. But my mother, who was old-fashioned in some ways, had set her heart on my marrying young. Although I was aware of this, I did not connect it at all with the person of S—— (I will not give his real name), a gentleman of about forty whom my father picked up on the links one day and brought home to luncheon. He was evidently in very comfortable circumstances, and he had good manners and a good presence ; in a word, I found it quite easy to get on with him. Only gradually, as his visits became more frequent and more extended, did I (as we used to say in those days) " tumble to the situation." Some indefinable instinct, a legacy, as my doctors told me afterwards, from the days of marriage by capture, told me that he was beginning to take a more than casual interest in me. From that moment, I am sorry

to say, I began to conceive the greatest possible distaste for him, and lost no opportunity of being away when he called, or of treating him with coldness when I was forced to be in the room with him. At last my mother tackled me directly. I told her the exact truth, that I had nothing whatever against him, and that he seemed to me well suited to make any woman happy and to help her forward in her career; but that I did not and could not feel any affection for him. My mother (I remember it all as if it were yesterday) knocked the ash off her cigar and said anxiously, "My dear, I don't think you can be well. What's wrong with seeing a doctor?"

In those days, many families were still old-fashioned enough to have a doctor who not only diagnosed the presence of disease but went on to prescribe for it himself—very much as if you were to put a law case in the hands of a solicitor and he were to take your case into court and plead as counsel. We had already adopted the more modern method, and Dr. Shanks, our dear old family physician, never dreamt of doing more than telling you whether you "had a case" and recommending a suitable specialist to take it to. I went round to his house, where he looked at my tongue, X-rayed me, felt my pulse, took my reaction-times, and shook his head importantly. "I am afraid you are in for some trouble, Miss Winterhead," he explained, "but I am not quite sure who is the best man to take it to. My feeling is that the nervous disorder is primary, and the organic only secondary, but on the whole it would be safest to start by seeing if we cannot attack the organic

trouble first. I will make an appointment for you with Sir Alexander Rymer ; and if there is any man who can keep you out of the hands of the nerve-doctors, he will." With a few reassuring words he showed me out, and I awaited Sir Alexander's verdict.

Sir Alexander was, I think, the most broad-minded man I have ever met. Well-known as a staunch antagonist of the mind-curing school, he nevertheless gave you the impression that he was fully prepared to take their theories into account, and to bow, if need were, to their diagnosis ; but on the other hand, his immediate duty was to prescribe for this case here and now, and while in any other case he might have hesitated, this was just the one case in a thousand which the mind-doctors could not hope to tackle successfully. " Now, my dear young thing " (he affected these old-world courtesies of speech), " if I were to send you on to a woman like Dr. Bowles she would quite certainly give you a lot of good advice, which would give you relief for the present, and then in a year or two's time you'd be back again here with the old trouble as bad as ever, and possibly worse owing to neglect. Our business just now is not to indulge in professional courtesies, we've got to get you well. Now, what I want you to do is this. Go very quietly : don't dance late more than twice or three times a week ; don't drive at more than thirty miles an hour ; don't inhale cigars ; don't play ' bridge ' till after tea ; and, if you can possibly manage it, try to give up shopping altogether for the present. Give nature every chance to right herself. Avoid milk in all forms, and fish, and dry toast. If you

aren't on the mend in a month or so, you will have to go somewhere where you can get good marsh air, the Thames Valley, of course, for preference." I went away greatly impressed with his manner, and honestly did my best to carry out his prescriptions: I spent all the October of 1940 at Goring, which was then only a small country town, and had ideal weather for my own requirements, since it hardly stopped raining the whole time I was there. But my physical symptoms were still disturbing, and, what alarmed my parents more, I could not meet S—— without a strong desire to run out of the room.

In these circumstances it was thought best that I should change my doctor. Dr. Bowles was abroad at the time, so I arranged for interviews with Dr. Tryer, who was by common consent the second-best mind-healer in London. She was a tall, rather sinister-looking woman, and I always felt like a frightened rabbit in her presence. This had the unfortunate effect of making me mix up my words, as I always do when I am nervous, and she regarded this confusion on my part, as clear evidence of an inhibition somewhere in my subconsciousness. For example, one of the first things she did was to ask me about my interview with my own doctor: I said, "He told me to put out my pulse, felt his head, and then shook my tongue"—in a moment Dr. Tryer had rushed to her typewriting-desk and was recording my idiotic remark for future reference. You know how it is when you once start losing your head? I could never say anything right after that. She held interminable conversations with me, and

it was quite a long time before she struck platinum on that long-forgotten air-raid. Then it was all plain sailing : I was simply docketed " cellar shell-shock "—the sort of phrase only Dr. Tryer could have pronounced without tripping over it—and herded together with a lot of other patients who had all to undergo the same treatment. Once a week we used to collect in a cellar, the doors of which were tightly locked, and Dr. Tryer, by some ingenious mechanical arrangement, contrived to make the most fiendish noises overhead. I do not suppose that even a modern air-raid could be quite so daunting ; she called it " reconstructing the conditions." When it was time to let us out she sounded the " All clear ! " (this was the signal for the end of an air-raid in the Five Years' War, apparently), and encouraged us to whistle it to ourselves as often as possible during the day. I still do it inadvertently when I am not thinking. This treatment obsessed my mind for nearly three months, and did everything except enable me to overcome my distaste for the presence of S——. By that time, at any rate, it was quite clear that what was chiefly wrong with me was nerves. Accordingly I put myself under the direction of the Berthellot school, determined to rid myself of nerves by the then popular expedient of auto-suggestion.

The Berthellot Institute then occupied the site of the old Hendon Aerodrome, which has since been utilized as a library for the official documents relating to the Great War. One did not lodge there, but spent most of the day there in " classes " of self-suggestion : a class would consist of fifty or sixty people all herded together

in the same lecture-room. The simplest exercise, which you ordinarily started on, consisted of shouting "Health, health, health! Glorious health!" in chorus. Juliet Savage, who came with me to watch one of these classes, said it was all she could do to refrain from shouting "Beer, beer, glorious beer" (an old chorus which she had picked up from an uncle when young) to see if she were detected or not amidst the general din. But there were more advanced exercises: I remember, for example, a sort of skittle-alley where you threw a large ball at a set of nine-pins, ejaculating "Better that time!" with every throw; it was said to be highly restorative. And then there was the ball-room, where you danced the Health-dance, and the gymnasium, where you did a sort of patent Indian clubs, and much more that I have forgotten. Mr. Druce, the Superintendent, was a brisk, rather oppressive sort of man who positively oozed health: when I was shown into his room he greeted me with the words, "Ha! Another of our malingerers! Isn't it almost time you gave up swinging the lead? Come now, you know there's nothing to be gained by it!" I replied that I was subject to headaches; that I had come there tha morning with a headache, which was, indeed, some-what worse after listening to the Health-chorus. He came up to me, put his hands on both sides of my head, and said, "What, that thing! Aching!" Then he rang a bell, and said to the attendant who appeared, "Oh, Miss Sonnenschein, do come here! This young lady thinks her head is aching!" To which Miss Sonnenschein, a rather gloomy lady to whom the whole

thing clearly came in the way of business, said in an unconvincing voice, " That's a good 'un ! " I asked, somewhat timidly, what happened to you if the treatment did not have a curative effect. Did the failures go out feeling exactly as ill as they did when they came in, or was it sometimes found that the treatment had been actually prejudicial ? " Failures ? " said Mr. Druce, " my dear madam, there *are* no failures." " Do you mean," I said, " that you are quite certain I shall go out of this place cured ? " " Certain ? Miss Sonnenschein, kindly explain to this young lady the sort of certainty which I feel about her recovery." To which Miss Sonnenschein, who was chewing, replied " Sure thing ! " I then asked whether in the event of my proving a failure the Institute would be prepared to refund my fees, but Mr. Druce simply repeated that there were no failures.

I cannot feel that I was ever meant for the Berthellot Institute ; it was too breezy for me altogether. I discontinued my attendance at the lectures before my proper time was up, and consequently was never recorded as a failure. Meanwhile a friend, Mrs. Sholto,[1] had recommended me to yet another variety of mind-doctors, the Mental Homœopathists, who were the sworn rivals of the Berthellot system. Theirs was a home treatment, and all you had to do was to murmur to yourself at frequent intervals, " Every day in every way I grow worse and worse and worse ! " You were also recommended to study a little pamphlet on the human body, entitled, " Our Disastrous Inheritance,"

[1] Previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

which showed you pictures of various parts of the human body suffering under the influence of virulent diseases, and gave you a long index of all possible morbid conditions of the human frame—Juliet said it was exactly like a manual she had called " Helicopter Troubles, and how to Trace them." I think I ought to have been an apt pupil for this system—the idea of which was that the conscious mind is in continual revolt from the impressions of the subconscious mind, and the more depressed your subconsciousness was the better your chance of recovery—for Mr. Druce had been an admirable preparation for it. But, though I stuck to it for some time, and seemed to have been gaining strength, an unexpected afternoon call from S—— immediately threw me back into a serious relapse.

Finally, I was induced to go down to Winchcombe, in the Cotswolds, to try the " colour-cure " which had recently been attracting a good deal of attention. After a long examination, I was relegated to the " orange suite," where I was expected to pass a complete fortnight. There were numerous other " orange " patients, but I was not allowed to speak to any of them : a saturnine old woman sat in one corner of the room, with the detached air of a bath attendant, to see that the rules were kept. I was given an orange dress, which matched the wall-paper, the furniture, even the flowerbeds outside the window. Reading was allowed, but not encouraged ; the great point, I was told, was to become saturated with orange as early as possible. I certainly became fed up with orange long before the fortnight was over, and by breaking a window (for

which I afterwards paid) contrived to get away into the grounds, and so, with the help of an errand-boy, into the outside world. To this day I cannot bear so much as an orange ribbon in my boudoir. I suppose Dr. Tryer would have called that an inhibition.

I cannot describe what a comfort it was to get home, and to find that my maid Antoinette had lit a fire in my bedroom, and got a mustard bath ready (she always stuck to it that I had only a cold), and had put a hot-water bottle in my bed and a Lourdes medal under the pillow. And so I found peace after all my rest-cures.

It proved that S—— had meanwhile got engaged—for which I cannot blame him—to somebody whose affections responded to his with less elaborate treatment. My nerves soon recovered, I am glad to say; and although symptoms of Hilton's disease showed themselves about fifteen years later, by that time both the disease itself and its cure had been scientifically studied, and it only needed a few weeks to put me on my feet again.

## CHAPTER VI

## BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

The country gentleman will always be the backbone of England; the backbone, and also the speedometer; the backbone, because the speedometer.—LORD HOPEDALE.

IT was only my illness that interrupted what had for some time been a cherished ambition with me,—to find a house for myself and my parents which, without being too far from London, would be more comfortable and more convenient to our needs. There was still one side of the great city which had never been affected by the growth of suburban railway facilities in the twenties and thirties—the little stretch of Hertfordshire that used to lie between the "Great Northern" and the "Great Eastern" systems. It was a fortunate choice that directed me to Greylands, a country property small for those days (though it seems large enough now!) in the neighbourhood of West Mill. The proximity of the Buntingford 'drome would make it easy to land near by even in bad weather, there was water on the estate, and I counted—alas! unnecessarily, as it proved—on the new golf links at Ardeley to satisfy my father's active tastes.

It was actually while we were engaged in moving into the new house that my poor father had a stroke, the precursor of no very distant end. He lingered

during the remainder of that year (1941), and was sometimes well enough to be wheeled down to the links in a bath-scooter; but early in the new year he had a fresh stroke, and died that February. In him I seemed to lose another link with the old, vigorous generation that had seen the turn of the century. He rests in the churchyard at West Mill: his epitaph, written in the style of a past day, runs as follows:

Sacred to the memory of
HERBERT, FIRST BARON BLISWORTH,
Who died at Greylands in this parish, deeply regretted,
On the 6th of February, 1941,
In the 62nd year of his age.
An English gentleman of the old school,
He was an unaffected friend,
An indulgent parent,
And a tolerant husband.
"In the Heaven a perfect round."

The acquisition of a moderate income could not induce me to give myself up to idleness and self-indulgence. I determined that I would take up the reins of management where my father had dropped them and make his business into the success it deserved to be. For this purpose I decided to go right through, starting at the very bottom as an inferior clerk, and working my way up. This was by no means an uncommon thing in those days for the junior partner of a business firm to do, and I have always felt that it gave us a great advantage, which many modern young men are unfortunate enough to miss. It meant that we got to know our employés, and to earn their confidence by working side by side with them. It meant

that we had a practical, first-hand knowledge of every department of the work, instead of depending on information supplied to us by others. It meant that we had the opportunity of winning our spurs, by showing in a humble sphere the capacity which alone would qualify us for a superior position. I have known a Gosport, a Macpherson, and a Schenkenberg serve their apprenticeship in this way, and express gratitude afterwards for the salutary discipline it entailed. For myself, I could not well leave my mother, who depended very much on me since our bereavement, but I had been careful to have the teledictaphone installed at Greylands as soon as we took it over, and it was thus possible for me, without ever actually going to the office, to take my orders every morning like a simple clerk, and to execute them to the satisfaction of my employers. In rather less than a year I had gained such a thorough grasp of the business and given such evidence of financial ability that I allowed myself to be advanced to the position of a partner in the firm. Not that, in doing so, I had any intention of giving myself an easy time or doing less than my share in the actual direction of the firm : from ten to one every morning and from three to five in the afternoon, unless any serious rival claims distracted my attention, the teledictaphone was always at my side and the affairs of the office engrossed me.

Meanwhile, it must be understood that it was rather a small world we lived in. It has been my good fortune to move in various kinds of society, and I will freely confess that it was not till a much later period

than this that the important people, the people who will have left their names inscribed on the scroll of history, were the guests of my roof or the habitués of my boudoir. Yet the simple life of the country-side had its charm in those days, a charm not easily recaptured now, when ease of intercommunication has made neighbours strangers, and thrown us into the society of cronies three counties off. I had, of course, my private helico, and had recently learned to drive it myself; and already one thought nothing of driving over to Cambridge for an afternoon call, or up to London for a dinner. But it needed a comfortable income to do this, and they were not days of comfortable incomes. The county squires still kept up the tradition of big nurseries; a family of four or five was by no means unusual even among Protestants. The professional classes were still heavily burdened by the income tax, which was nearly a shilling in the pound, and it was only in very rare cases that they could keep anything more than motors. Our old doctor, though a bachelor, only drove a Rolls-Royce till the day of his death. So we were all herded together within the narrow confines of "the county," and found, as people no doubt find when they are shipwrecked together on a desert island, that the little handful of acquaintances necessity makes for you are well worth studying; have their own foibles, their own angles, their own little traits of lovableness; that to keep up your own position, and at the same time to keep the peace, among your immediate neighbours demands as much in the way of social tact as holding a *salon* in Hampstead or entertaining Royalty in Mayfair.

To begin with, there was our vicar, Mr. Rowlands. A mild man, hampered by shyness and unconscious of the power of local gossip, he had made a grave mistake in marrying his curate. Mrs. Rowlands, who had been ordained a deaconess at the early age of 24, was a woman of strong, masterful character who had come into the parish with the almost expressed intention of "making things hum." She was of the most violent Relativist school, and rumour said that she always omitted the Creed when she was conducting the service herself, and sat down, sometimes even whistling to herself, when Mr. Rowlands said it. Mr. Rowlands was of the old-fashioned evangelical school, and the village had grown accustomed to his ways: church-going was not common, but his slim figure in its plain cassock and penwipery sort of cap, bound for morning or evening service in church, was a familiar sight to all, and he was universally respected. The deaconess, Miss Anderson as she then was, became the subject of a local taboo; and a memorial, signed by twenty-eight communicants, was sent to the Bishop to uphold Mr. Rowlands against the misbehaviour of his impetuous colleague. It was while this document still lay—it is to be feared, unread—on the Bishop's study table, that the unlooked-for Concordat between vicar and curate suddenly altered the whole situation; Mr. Rowlands, instead of laying a complaint against Miss Anderson, had determined to lead her to the altar.

I do not know how they got on after that with the church services, for I was not *pratiquant* as far as the village was concerned. It will have become obvious

by now that my religious convictions at the time were not of the deepest, and my church attendance was confined to an occasional visit to Evensong in King's Chapel, where the services were at that time adorably rendered. But in the life of our little community Mr. and Mrs. Rowlands counted for a good deal. He was of the eternal type produced by an established Christianity: you could picture him, with a few alterations of outward manner and expression, as a benign Caroline clergyman, happily married, writing love-poems to wholly imaginary young ladies with classical names, or as an old-fashioned High Churchman of the early Tractarian period receiving his "Tracts for the Times" regularly, and not knowing whether he stood on his head or his heels as he read them. He was obsessed with the consciousness that we lived in changeful times, and desperately convinced that "the Church" must have "an attitude" to take up about it all. Often he would deplore the fact that the Bishops did not "give him a lead": for himself he never got nearer to an attitude than a profound conviction that "while on the one hand . . . yet on the other hand . . .," a turn of phrase which was so frequent in his sermons that Juliet Savage, who sat under him exasperated whenever she came to stay with me, said he was the only Christian she had ever met whose left hand never knew what his right hand did. Another fixed principle of his was that all these movements of our time would work themselves out right in the long run: whatever was best, he used to say, would remain, while everything else would disappear. The only occasion on which this conviction

is known to have deserted him was one night when his house was broken into by burglars.

His was a marriage of opposites. Mrs. Rowlands seemed to worship innovation for its own sake, and she seemed to read the papers for no other purpose than to learn what new discoveries or inventions were announced, principally from America, and retail them afterwards, with a purr of admiration, to anyone who had not had the good fortune to see them first. I was easy game for her, since I used to keep abreast of the day's news by means of the tape-machine in the front hall, and was never properly prepared for her onslaughts. " Do you hear this, Miss Winterhead," she would say, " about the utilization of atomic force? They tell me " (" they " always meant the *Daily Mail*) " that we shall soon be able to travel to Spitzbergen without spending a penny ! " Then I would maintain that they would have to pay me pretty heavily before *I* would go there (Mrs. Rowlands always made me frivolous), and she would retaliate by informing me that it was now proved, from a skull discovered near Letchworth, that man had existed three hundred million years before Adam ; it was no good my suggesting that Eve's appearance must in that case have been welcomed with relief ; she would be off on a fresh tangent before I had finished my sentence. I never know which class inspires more horror in me, the people who tell you things you did know or the people who tell you things you didn't. The former insult one's intelligence, the latter one's lack of it.

The difficulty of fitting in Mrs. Rowlands was not so

much her husband, for she had him well in hand, nor the villagers, who to tell the truth were rather apathetic about her innovations. (I remember there was some trouble when she proposed a scheme for the bringing up of all the children of the parish in complete ignorance of who their parents were, but this was averted somehow.) The real difficulty was with Lady Combe, the Squiress of the place, from whom my house was rented before I managed to buy it. Lady Combe, the wife of Sir Richard Combe, an amiable old nonentity, combined a most acidulated manner and a total incapacity for all politeness in conversation with an inexhaustible desire to mother the parish, the county, and the world in general. She was also incurably old-fashioned. Her great speciality was bazaars (which she still pronounced in the old-fashioned way, with the accent on the last syllable), and of these she seldom organized less than three in a twelvemonth. Her preference, she confided to me, would have been for the old style of bazaar when you actually had " stalls " with goods laid out on them after the manner of an ordinary shop, and the neighbours came and bought such goods, at fancy prices, quite regardless of whether they needed them or not. She said she got rid of all the *really* ugly things in her house that way—I cannot think what they must have been like, considering what was left. As it was, she demanded your presence at the bazaar itself if you were to be awarded your winning numbers. And, unless she were violently discouraged, she would have her lawn (or mine, for that matter) set out with a whole array of skittle-alleys, coco-nut shies, and

lucky tubs such as, I suppose, our great-aunts must have revelled in.

Over these bazaars there was a permanent difficulty, because it had been laid down by law (owing to Non-conformist action at the time of the ballot scandals in the early thirties) that no bazaar might be held unless either the local clergyman or his wife were on the committee of management. I shall never forget a luncheon-party at my house at which Lady Combe and I and the Rowlands were present to discuss the latest bazaar-fête—I think it was in aid of the Society for Teaching Useful Trades to Out-of-work Chauffeurs—but fell inevitably into general conversation. "Miss Winterhead," said Mrs. Rowlands, "did you see about that very interesting schism in the Boy Scout Movement since the Congress at Nottingham, in to-day's *Times*?" "Yesterday's, my dear, yesterday's," put in the vicar, as if to suggest that the crisis might have had time to blow over by now. It appeared that the Socialist patrol leaders had protested *en masse* against the rule of saluting the Confederation Jack, and since they could not win their point, had started a schism. In this new "Boy Steward" movement, the practice of saluting was to be entirely abandoned; the names of carnivorous animals such as the lion and the tiger were to disappear from the totem-list, and to be replaced by those of the ant, the bee, the beaver, and other commodity-producing animals, umbrellas might be carried instead of staves, and most important of all, the sleeves might be buttoned at the wrist instead of rolled up to the elbow. Further, instead of doing a

good deed every day, the Stewards were under contract to do a bad deed every day ; and many old gentlemen were writing to the papers to complain that they had been snowballed, or tripped up with wires, or brought down by margarine-slides, under the influence of the new movement. Of all this, I need hardly say, Mrs. Rowlands was in hearty support. " Independence," she said, " and self-reliance—that's what the old movement lacked."

" Then, I suppose," suggested Lady Combe icily, " that you would endorse the action of a ' circle ' of Boy Stewards in Darlington who surrounded a heavily moustached clergyman of the Established Church with cries of ' Walrus ! ' as I read in the paper myself ? " Mrs. Rowlands was rather taken aback, and the vicar hastened to interpose " A totem-cry, dear Lady Combe, doubtless a Totem-cry. I myself was surprised for a time after coming into the parish at being greeted with shouts of ' Rah-rah-rah-rah-kangaroo ! ' but I understood afterwards that it was well-meant, thoroughly well-meant." I said I had never thought of the walrus as a commodity-producing animal. Mrs. Rowlands, recovering herself, said that the reason why these boys were surprised at clergymen wearing moustaches was because the Westernizing party (as the High Churchmen were already beginning to be called) had always made such a point of going about clean-shaven, which gave a handle to the anti-clericals. (I suppressed a wild desire to suggest that they would have given a better handle by wearing moustaches.) My mother said she could remember when it was quite

common for laymen to wear moustaches. She could also remember the habit of shouting out " Beaver ! " when you met a man with a beard, but she did not think this was connected with the Boy Scout movement. Mr. Rowlands said " Beavers ! Ah, exactly," as if that proved it. Lady Combe said in her days boys used to have a respect for the clergy, whatever their views, and after all the children who called Elisha " bald-pate " were eaten by she-bears. Mrs. Rowlands said it was now proved that this story was merely a false explanation of some old Babylonian sculpture, probably of a ritual origin. Mr. Rowlands said it was quite true the Hebrew word might mean " she-bears," but it could also just as well mean " whirlwinds."

Lady Combe said she thought, anyhow, it was a shame to teach innocent children to have no respect for their elders, their country, or their God. Mrs. Rowlands said that, since Larsen's investigation of juvenile crime, she would have thought it impossible for anyone to talk like that about innocent children. Mr. Rowlands said he hoped great good would come out of the new movement, great good. But he thought it would need a great deal of direction. Lady Combe said she would like to have the directing of it. Mrs, Rowlands said she thought Mr. Gomez (the leader of the new movement) was one of those men who are sent to make the world think. Lady Combe said that if she had Mr. Gumpish at the end of her garden-hose she'd make him think. Mr. Rowlands said he felt, anyhow, there was great promise of good in the Salvation Scouts. Lady Combe said she never had approved

of the Salvation Army since they gave up preaching in the streets : " but that came, of course, of their getting endowments ; it's the old story, once you endow a religion you ruin it." This was a hit at Mrs. Rowlands, who was well known, in spite of her progressive views, to be hostile to the Disestablishment agitation which was then running through the country. " My own feeling," she said, " is that our first duty is *charity* towards others "—this with a venomous look at Lady Combe—and thereupon she took her leave. For a long time after this encounter Lady Combe would never go to the parish church, but ordered out her picturesque old Napier car (she planed, not on a helico but on an old push-plane ; only she would not have even this out on Sunday) and drove off importantly to Buntingford.

But I must not give the impression that these bickerings were typical of our little country society. There were brave days, when we would drive out to the meet (this was before the Universal Muzzling Act, which to my mind altered the whole character of fox-hunting) at Braughing or Furneaux Pelham, and cheered as the huntsmen rode off : there were still a few old gentlemen in our part who followed the hounds themselves on horseback. Or when Christmas came round, and we would entertain the village children in mediæval fashion with a huge Christmas tree in the great Hall, and their merry laughter would ring through the house as they daringly plucked the snapdragon from the burning petrol. Or those autumn afternoons when the shooting-season was on, and you would hover with

the guns at two or three hundred yards, fascinated to watch the beaters shooing their way through the thick undergrowth far below you. And so you would come back, refreshingly tired, to the ingle-nook by the comfortable stove-side, and tell stories of the day's sport, while the dusk gathered after the mid-ocean glories of a Hertfordshire sunset. Well, well, the pseudo-Catullus was right—*fulsere vere candidi tibi soles*.

My dear mother's health gave me some anxiety at this time, and I did not spend much of my leisure in visiting: but London was, of course, easily accessible, and I went up a good deal to theatres, dinner-parties, and dances. Dancing had become a simpler matter since my school days, and you could go through an evening quite creditably without knowing anything besides the dear old two-step. Balls still did not ordinarily last beyond four in the morning: we were early birds then, and not only the business offices but many even of the larger shops were open by eleven: we had to get some sleep! There was never any difficulty for me in securing partners: the hostesses of the time were all bemoaning the fact that none of the young women seemed to dance nowadays: "My dear," Mrs. Drake [1] used to say, "I wish you'd known my dancing-room twenty years ago! Young women used to be really active then, and thought nothing of spending an evening dancing after they'd been motoring or golfing all day. But now they've all become bears, my dear,

[1] Previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

positive bears." But in truth it was not, as I well knew, merely the pressure of other enjoyments that made us women reluctant to appear in the ball-room. There was already a strong feeling that the old system of "partners" was degrading to our sex, and it was only when the new "catch-as-catch-can" movements were introduced from America that we felt woman had attained her true dignity.

Drawing-rooms in those days (for we still had "drawing-rooms") looked very different from our boudoirs, chiefly because it had gone quite out of fashion to have pictures on the walls. Nobody, except a few die-hards, dared to be *fin de siècle* enough to hang the old representation-pictures, which we were taught to regard as only fit for chocolate-boxes: whereas the Futurist pictures—well, one did not want to be Puritan about it, but there were the servants to think of. The stove-place, owing to the necessity of having a chimney, still stood against one wall of the room, a very inconvenient arrangement, since only a few people could warm their hands at the same time. The electrics, though often concealed with shades, were still visible: lighting by radiance did not come in till much later. Meal-times were very early, judged by our standards: luncheon seldom happened after two, or dinner after nine. The craze for bridge and poker had almost died down by the time of which I write: after our strenuous days we felt that intellectual games were out of place, and the reign of "plonk," "oogle" and other games of chance was already beginning. Out of doors, tennis had nearly come to its own, although only the

larger houses at that time had been roofed over for courts, and ordinary folk had often to travel some distance for a game.

The theatre was then, I suppose, at a height of classical perfection it has never quite attained since. Perhaps this is partly due to the nature of the case: it is difficult for us old-fashioned folk not to regret our modern "improvements." After all, there was something to be said for seeing the actor before you in the flesh, hearing his own words as he uttered them. "Mummy," a small infant of my acquaintance said when he was taken to the first Cinemaphone performance in London, "I want to see ve words come out of his mouf." And there are effects of depth and substantialness which, with all the best appliances we have invented, you cannot quite reproduce on a blank wall. Anyhow, in the London of the forties we used to expect to see the actors and actresses appear in person: and if one of them was indisposed we had to put up with an "understudy." It is, of course, difficult for the modern generation to imagine how repeating the same part in the same theatre for four or five years on end can have failed to induce staleness and listlessness in the cast; yet I can assure my readers it was not so. Douglas Fitzgerald and Leonard Archdale never consented to perform for the screen, so that when I say I have seen them (the former in "What about it?" the latter in "Strike me!") I can make a boast which few living people share with me. Those other giants and giantesses of the stage, Bruce Holbrook, Denys O'Leary, Vivian Stalbrooke, Olga Labadie and so on,

are figures which my readers will say they have all seen: I can only reply, as Aeschines is said to have said of Demosthenes, "Quid, si ipsum audiisses?"

Of the external appearance of London I do not mean to say much, since after all it has not changed in its essentials, except perhaps in the suburbs. Probably the modern reader, if he could be transported back there, would find the most unsightly aspect of it the advertisements which, before sky-writing was properly understood and developed, used to be written up on board and blank walls, as they are now on shop windows. I should like to see him cross the street on the level of the traffic, as we used to have to do in those days! But of course we did not need to cross the street so often, when we were allowed to move in either direction on either pavement: and only a few of the more crowded pavements had been mobilized, so that you could ordinarily look into a shop window while standing still. The shops themselves, before the London Improvement Act, had grown to an enormous size: they used to tell an irreverent story of a very ungodly young gentleman who died while shopping at Selfridge's, and for quite a long time afterwards could not be persuaded that he had got further than the basement! But I should weary my readers if I prosed on about all the changes I have seen since then: after all, you can see London as it was in the forties in plenty of old prints and history-books.

Those were happy days in my life, though I had not yet found my two great sources of happiness, of which you shall hear later. I suppose I must have had my

good looks, for I was filmed among the Society beauties of the day, but only, I think, when they were getting rather hard up for material! My business was prospering, and I had no cause to regret, as I have never since had cause to regret, my purchase of Greylands. And if at times the ambition to write or to come before the world as a public figure visited me in my dreams, it was only to be put on one side. Some women, they say, lose their ambitions with matrimony; for myself, I think it has always been quite otherwise, and it was chiefly the desire to show my husband that I was worthy of his love, and to give him a name and an importance in Society, that later made me look to a political career as the proper sphere for the exercise of my poor capacities.

## CHAPTER VII

## WHAT I FOUND IN AMERICA

Oh, the wide plains, and the bustling films, that are America,
This, this is life, and Europe a *forma cadaverica*.

—SPINSHOTT.

IT was early in 1944 that business claims made it necessary for me to undertake a journey to the United States. I could not have chosen a better moment for my visit, for the Anglo-American entente was just then at its zenith. After the Five Years' War, it is well known, there was a period at which relations were somewhat strained, chiefly owing to our indebtedness. It is a common experience in ordinary life that, however friendly be your feelings towards A., you tend to avoid A. in the club or crowd to the other end of the Tube-lift at her approach when she has become your creditor. Such was the constraint in our relations with the United States, and for a time it seemed (I am speaking of my own memories of my geographical training at Oxford) as if the two countries were bound to remain on distant terms and finally drift into hostility. It was only in 1935 that the ill-starred political genius, James Tremayne, brought forward his scheme for a *rapprochement*, which was still laughed at as chimerical at the time of his early death in 1936. It is true that his proposals had erred on the side of generosity, offering as they did four dukedoms, eight marquisates, thirty-

two peerages, and a hundred and eight baronetcies to American citizens on condition of a full discharge of our War Debt. There was also a good deal of doctrinaire objection on the part of the labour Government which was then in power : " the sons of George Washington," as Mr. Ropes oratorically put it, " are not to be bribed with sugar-plums." The sons of George Washington could not very well make any advances while the market was still so doubtful, and it was only on the accession to power of the Tories (under Lord Hopedale) in 1941 that negotiations were begun in earnest. The buyers were coy at first, and for a time it seemed as if no business was being done, but in 1942 patriotism on both sides of the Atlantic triumphed over all obstacles and our Transocean creditors consented to call it a deal at three dukedoms, six marquisates, thirty-six peerages, seventy-two baronetcies, and a hundred and twenty knighthoods, on condition that the honours in question were put up to an open ballot, the British Government waiving on its side all right of selection.

My American hosts used to describe to me the excitement of those early days of 1943, when the ballot was held. An attempt was made at first to keep a fixed price for the tickets, £1000 for a dukedom entry and so on; but this attempt soon proved impracticable. When the first allotment had been completed the tickets immediately began to be put up to auction, and prices soared dangerously, £10,000 being freely quoted for a dukedom entry before the end of April. But a slight trade depression produced a slump, and prices were sagging heavily by the end of June, when the

ballot was held. The Duke of Illinois, for example, got in on the ground floor and picked up his ticket in discharge of a bad debt at £4000. Among all the buyers, none brought a cooler head or a more iron nerve to the business than a young citizen of Connecticut, Wilson J. Harkness. He had speculated early; a millionaire himself, he had formed a ring in which all the other partners were men of straw whose premiums were paid by himself, and by the time the first allotment was made he found himself almost safe for a marquisate, while he held a block of baronetcies that almost amounted to a controlling interest. At the moment when the market was strongest he sold out his marquisate options, and as prices fell began steadily buying peerages. His forethought was justified, for though at the time of the ballot he held eighty-six peerage tickets, only one of these proved to be a winning number. (His three baronetcies, by a gracious act of international courtesy, he allowed to lapse to the Crown.) There was some feeling at first among the successful competitors against the adoption of territorial titles, and there is still a Duke McGinnis in Boston to-day, but Wilson Harkness knew by instinct what was expected of him, and early appeared in the Honours List as Wilson Lord Porstock.

It was in the first flush of good feeling, when Great Britain felt the relief of being discharged from so fearful an indebtedness, and the United States public felt bound to us closer than ever by the ennoblement of so many of its most prominent citizens, that I made my business trip. I went by air, of course, on

the *Atmospheric*, one of the old Handley Page line. I missed, by doing so, the sight of the Statue of Liberty, which had then only just been fitted with the apparatus which makes its right eye wink on the approach of the traveller: but as we came to earth at the customs-drome we were greeted by the gigantic "Eagle" scar on the hill-side, which has since been filled in with lapis-lazuli, but was then more striking for the simplicity of the natural chalk. We were still in the old prohibition days, and I remember that before landing we came to water beside a sea-going liner, into which we transferred all our petrol tins, receiving in return a heavy cargo of similar tins, concerning the contents of which no questions were asked of us when we landed.

The hospitality of the Americans has always been, and still is, justly famous, but I suppose the arrangements for its exercise have never been so elaborate or so complete as they were at the time of my visit. You took with you no introductions, had no questions asked about your antecedents, so long as you were a first-class passenger. You went straight from the customs-drome to a hospitality bureau, where you stated the probable length of your stay and gave a list of the cities you intended to visit, in return for which an official handed you a complete list of the hosts who were to entertain you at each centre, together with a little sheaf of "emergency introductions" for each—the need for these last came home to me at San Francisco, where I found that my destined host had gone bankrupt and shot himself the day before my arrival. It was without any fuss or elaborateness of introductions etc. that I

spent seven months on this hospitable continent, visiting New York, Boston, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Wichita, and Rooseveltville in the course of my stay. I should explain that when I arrived at New York I received a wireless informing me that the business projects which my visit had in view were not, after all, feasible; but my partners agreed with me that since I had had all the fatigue of the journey I might as well travel about and improve my mind a bit before returning to harness.

I have not been to America since, so that I cannot speak as an eye-witness when I contrast the America of forty years ago with the America of to-day. My readers will not, therefore, expect any very full descriptions under this head. I need only remind them that this was before the shifting of the earthquake zone, which made it necessary for our cousins overseas to build all their houses in one storey: that the war between the Wet and the Dry had not yet been fought, and General Murchison was only known as an obscure political agitator; that the repatriation of the negro population, which only set in properly with the granting of Nigerian Home Rule, was at this time hardly thought of; that the immigration of Chinese and Japanese exiles, which was due to the over-population of the Eastern countries before the benefits of our civilization began to tell upon the birthrate, was still regarded as a menace; that Catholicism, finally, though it had the numerical superiority, was still far from being the dominant religion of the Continent—its

progress in Canada was more rapid than its progress further South. It was a very different America, then, that I visited; and I think the best way to avoid continual comparisons between then and now, of which my readers must be sufficiently weary, will be to quote extracts from the letters I wrote home to my mother at the time. She kept all these, and for myself I think the value of old letters in recapturing a lost atmosphere amply atones for the occasional irritation one feels at their out-of-dateness. Let them stand, then, as I find them in my mother's desk, in the clear, bold type-writing of my girlish days. I should say, however, by way of preface, that at the time of my visit the country was much exercised by the violent, but, as it proved, unsuccessful campaign which was being organized against the importation and use of chewing-gum. Society was everywhere divided into the Sticky Party and the Clean Party, and you have to understand what is meant when I speak of a state "going sticky" or "going clean."

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NEW YORK, *March* 3.

DEAR OLD THING,—

I am quartered here on Lord Poughkeepsie and his wife, such a charming couple. The weather is, we hear, intensely cold, but one doesn't come into personal contact with it in these parts: a closed motor stands ready on the lift when you want to go "out," and you take care to fasten all the windows before it is lowered into the porch. The same sort of thing happens, of course, at the other end. We had a most interesting dinner-

party here last night with a very old American family, the van Murphy's—he is said to have refused a knighthood, which is regarded as a frightfully desperate thing to do, out here. He says the Cleans are gaining in the East, though New York is sticky to a man ; but it is the Western vote which will count. In Los Angeles it is not safe to go out of doors unless you pretend to be chewing, and some of the more peaceable citizens keep marbles in their cheeks permanently, to avoid being held up and questioned. Several of the States have already gone clean, including Maine, where the result, they tell me, has been an appalling outbreak of sweet-eating. Even here it is quite difficult to get butterscotch or barley-sugar, because there is such a lot of hoarding going on. I asked whether either party was likely to include the No-gum plank in its platform, and he said the Revolutionaries (they correspond to our Conservatives, you know) have practically pledged themselves to it. I haven't caught the habit myself yet ; it is horrible when they are chewing the stuff, but still worse when they " release " it.

Mr. van Murphy startled me by asking me whether I was fond of Theocritus ! For a moment I imagined it was a kind of cigarette, but just remembered in time that it was the name of a classical author, and said I had never been encouraged to read him, because in England it wasn't thought proper for young girls. This was a desperate shot, but turned out to be a fortunate one ; he quite understood. It seems that they read the classics out here with great avidity, and Greek forms part of their ordinary education ! Mr. van

Murphy continued to talk about Theocritus, seeing that the field was clear for him, and said he did not think he was as good as Longfellow, not so uplifting. I said I always felt uplifted by Longfellow. He said Lucretius was great stuff, but kind of old-fashioned: the man hadn't got our advantages, scince being little studied in those times. He thought if Lucretius could come to life now a man like Jefferson could hand him the soap. I had no idea what he meant, so agreed feverishly. He said he had learnt scince pretty average when he was at the seminary, and thought it was a great thing for a boy; gave him a kind of scatter for things. I was feeling badly out of my depth (you know, Lady Poughkeepsie afterwards told me that the real high-class Americans don't talk slang; "a man like Alge van Murphy, now, you couldn't tell him from a Britisher by his talk"). I felt it was my turn to "come in" somehow, so (remembering my *Stories from the Aeneid*) I asked if Virgil was read much in American schools; I thought boys enjoyed it so much more if the books they read had a plot and a human interest. He said it was pretty generally considered in American circles that Virgilius P. Maro was the greatest man God ever. I turned in despair to the man on the other side. He turned out to be a Professor of philosophy, but was fortunately disinclined to talk shop. Indeed, for about twenty minutes on end he told me all about the points of all the Derby winners for the last ten years or so: they are a strange people. . . .

New York, March 24. To-morrow I am to cross the Continent. I am going by helico after all, because I

want to crowd in as much sight-seeing as I can. I am sorry, though, to miss the train-journey; apparently it is like nothing on earth. The trains only go at twenty miles an hour, on a fabulously broad gauge, and living in them is like living in a hotel. The engines consume their own smoke, and if the weather is fine you spend your time on the top of the carriage, which is all laid out as a flower garden! Each coach is named after the flower that is principally cultivated on the top of it. Life on the train is so quiet that the journey is regularly recommended by doctors to patients who have had a nervous break-down. There is always a hospital coach, and it is a favourite joke against the company to declare that when the train reaches its terminus the guard—I mean the "conductor"—has to hand in a list of Births, Deaths, and Marriages. Another humorist assured me that it is only a matter of time before they start granting divorces on these trains; "twenty-five days between stations is a long stretch, you know, Miss Winterhead." It is really true that they have swimming-baths in summer, and that you can send your clothes to the wash!

I am very sorry to hear about the strike at the College of Heralds. It's true, of course, that they've had to work overtime, and that the salaries are calculated on a hopelessly outworn scale, but I can't feel they're likely to get their way. And what will Frank Hopgood do if they don't take him back after the strike? He had such a promising career in front of him, and I can't imagine him settling down to a new job. . . .

Washington, April 7. People talk about nothing

except the Gum Question here. Mrs. Rivers, my hostess here, who is passionately Clean (you understand what I mean, don't you? It's the oddest thing to hear people talking about it, because one's always hearing things like "We'll have no Clean Senator in these parts," or "Mrs. So-and-so isn't as Clean as she used to be")—what was I saying? Yes, Mrs. Rivers tells me that the reason why they are so keen on it is that the gum-makers have notoriously been introducing opium into the gum for years past. She says a girl who has the chewing habit is "sucking her Particular Judgement every time," which I thought a nice phrase. By the way, I have been making a little list of Americanisms to send you: I give them here with the equivalents opposite:

| | |
|---|---|
| He didn't come up by the 4.33. | He wasn't born yesterday. |
| He's got his flying check . | He has died. |
| He's lost weight . | |
| He's joined the 'cellos . | |
| He's got in amongst it . | |
| He's gone in off the flush . | |
| Have my card . . . | That doesn't deceive me. |
| To get one's diaphragm buzzing . . . | To have a meal. |
| He's under the hoist . | He doesn't count. |
| He's mislaid his gum somewhere . . . . | He is off his head. |
| There's no hair on that egg | That's no use. |
| I should half . . . | No, thank you. |
| To come down butter-side up | To fall on one's feet. |

And so on and so on. I'm only gradually getting into the way of understanding what it all means ; probably when I come home I shall just have begun to talk it !

Please tell Mrs. Rowlands that I have been under the Niagara Falls on a hydroplane. I haven't been anywhere near them really, but I thought she'd like to hear that kind of thing. . . .

Los Angeles, June 2, 1944. I told my host here that I wanted to go out and see the country a bit, and what was my surprise to be told that it is forbidden by the police ! It appears that the whole of this countryside is entirely given up to the film industry, and there used to be so many accidents through people getting caught in prairie-fires, being trodden to death by wild buffaloes, falling into man-traps, getting cut off by artificial floods, and (worse than all) standing in the way when the pictures were actually being taken, that they had to issue a sort of special permit for film actors, and non-combatants (so to speak) have to keep within the area of the town itself. I was, however, allowed to fly over the country a bit, and saw, within the space of two hours, a volcano in explosion, two bull-fights, an *auto-da-fé*, and what looked like a lynching, but was really, I believe, a comic scene representing a man trying to get away from autograph hunters. . . .

Boston, July 29, 1944. I went out to dinner with some very exclusive and old-fashioned people here, who, I was told afterwards, are Christian Scientists. They believe there is no such thing as pain, and no such thing as sin, which must be very comforting for them. They were started, I am told, by a Mrs. Eddy, whom

they are expecting to reappear on earth very shortly.

I am beginning to be homesick already. I have not met many people here, except one young man, whom I thought rather interesting ; but I had that odd feeling one gets sometimes that he didn't like me. I'll tell you about him later, perhaps. I feel rather lonely, and wanting to be back with you at dear Greylands.

Please tell Mrs. Rowlands that the Feminist movement is making great strides in Salt Lake City. A woman may regard herself as *ipso facto* divorced if her husband forgets to shut the door, and they are working steadily towards polyandry. . . .

* * * * *

I must here interrupt these selections from my correspondence ; for it was at Boston, as my reader will perhaps have guessed, that I had the happiness of meeting Porstock ; and my letters from that time onwards have a way of always coming back to one subject, and treating that subject in the sentimental vein young ladies are apt to fall into on such occasions—I will not " give myself away " by risking any more quotations. It was with my kind hosts at Boston, Lord and Lady Massachussets, that Porstock was first introduced to me ; he used to tell me afterwards that he had the feeling his tie wasn't straight all the evening, and that he was never so uncomfortable in his life ! He was of the American type of handsomeness which has given so many bridegrooms to the daughters of English families ; tall, straight, square-jawed, a man of purpose. After our second meeting we seemed to have a natural attraction for one another, and he used to call

every morning and take me out in his helico till late at night, missing, I am afraid, a luncheon engagement now and again. People began to suspect that an attachment was growing up between us even before we realized it ourselves; and witty Lady Massachussets used to chaff me when I seemed absent-minded in conversation by telling me I was always up in the air!

"Was it touch of hand, turn of head?" I only know that one evening when we were flying back from Montreal (the only time I crossed into Dominion territory during my stay) he had just had occasion to help me with the steering-gear, which was a little stiff, when suddenly we looked into one another's eyes and knew our fate. "It's a pity," he said suddenly, "there's no landing-stage at that damned registry." "Wilson, you fool," I said, "has it taken you a fortnight to discover that?" "Guess I'm not going to be that kind of fool any longer," he said—and he wasn't. But there! What right has an old woman, after all her good resolutions, to repeat all these tender passages? Enough to say, as Porstock himself said in announcing the affair to our host, that we came down hitched. I asked his leave to speak to his mother the same evening, and found her kindness itself. "Take him, my dear," she said, "and God bless you; you have discovered our treasure."

It was arranged, of course, that I should take him back to England, and that our marriage should be celebrated there. Since my mother did not approve of short engagements, we decided to put off the ceremony till October. The Press—what a curious habit the

Press has of suddenly waking up and finding that it knew all about you !—gave us an almost royal welcome. I must overcome my blushes, and give you an extract from the *Daily Mail*, if only to let you enjoy the quaint, archaic language of it :

" PEER'S DAUGHTER HITCHES MILLIONAIRE : ANOTHER AMERICAN COUSIN GETS HIS FROM CUPID

" The U.S. citizen is a brainy lad, and it isn't only for titles he comes over this side : I hardly suppose ! Wilse Harkness, anyhow, Lord Porstock as he is since those birthday honours set things buzzing, knew a good thing when he saw one ; and pretty Miss Winterhead, daughter of the lamented Lord Blisworth, was too good a thing to miss when he met her flying over Boston. When he found he hadn't foul-hooked an angel (his first impression) he lost no time in exhorting her to nominate the anniversary. So the red carpets will have to be got out against her return to her charming country seat at Greylands, near West Mill in Herts, and the congregation will have another set of banns to sit out on Sunday. Lord Porstock's fame as a good sportsman and a charming host has preceded him here, and those who envy him his fortune will not be slow to hold out to him the hand of good-fellowship. The best of luck to him and his winsome lady ! "

They are yellow now with age, those lines that once looked fresh and clean in my scrap-book, and their old-world diction falls oddly on the ear, that once sounded so modern and so vivid. Yet they are still fresh to the heart of a sentimental old woman, whose wrinkled features could once justify those sprightly gallantries, and who felt then, with a certainty she has never had reason to regret, that the summer-time of her life was coming and that all was well with her world.

## CHAPTER VIII

## MY MARRIAGE

*Mrs. Bilston:* Marriage is a necessary evil; without it, we should have no divorce.—SHEEPSHANKS: *Love, the Registrar.*

I SUPPOSE all of us, except those methodical people who keep all their letters, and those who, yet more cold-blooded, destroy all their letters, find that they have little bundles left about in old drawers containing the correspondence that was addressed to them on such and such an occasion—when they won a prize, when they suffered a bereavement, and so on. I find I have just such a batch of documents relating to my engagement. Some of them are too conventional, some of them too personal to quote, but it can do no harm to give a few of them here, to show how we congratulated one another in those days upon a situation which, however the centuries slip past us, never loses its freshness. Here, then, is Lady Combe: the frigidity of her manner, I must here insist, was due to a natural incapacity to expand even in honour of an occasion, and does not betray any lack of good-will towards her fortunate young tenant:

MY DEAR OPAL,—

I cannot wait till your return to Greylands to send you my heartiest good wishes, and Sir Richard's along

with them. You would think me ungracious if I did not record the pleasure it gives me *personally* to hear that you intend remaining at Greylands and bringing your husband over to live in England. In my young days it was thought more natural for a wife to take up her residence with her husband and allow him to follow his own career, but doubtless this feeling has changed, as so much else has. Anyhow, I trust that you will be very happy. I am sure that you will have been too sensible to allow yourself to be carried away by your impetuous temperament into a step you would afterwards regret. Americans, I believe, have great charm sometimes: indeed, Sir Richard's grandmother was a Canadian. So many marriages seem to turn out unhappy nowadays, and yet I don't believe it's because men are different from what they were; it seems to me that modern women don't know how to treat them: they haven't the home tact and the *yieldingness*, if I may use such a word, which makes for domestic harmony. You, I am sure, my dear Opal, will not fall into the mistake of looking upon your husband as a *chattel* to be played with. I do hope you will see your way to having the marriage performed down at West Mill. That Rowlands woman, of course, does make it difficult, but I know you agree with me that down in the country we must keep things together: and Rowlands himself is an excellent, well-meaning little man; I sometimes think it is a pity the Bishop does not recognize his services by transferring him to another living. Please let us know what you mean to do as soon as it is convenient, and accept my very earnest hopes that all will turn

out for the best with regard to the step you are taking.

Yours very sincerely,
CYBELE COMBE

Mrs. Rowlands' letter came by the same mail; you felt as if she had written it as a counterblast:

MY DEAR MISS WINTERHEAD,—

I cannot tell you what pleasure it gives me to hear that you are bringing a citizen of that very remarkable country you have been travelling in, to wake us all up, and, yes, uplift us all, in our little world at West Mill. I am sure you will not mind my taking such an abstract view of a step which to you, of course, is primarily a personal matter. But we women, when we marry, have to pass out of the self-centred, personal atmosphere in which our effete system of education nurtures us, and take upon ourselves public duties and public responsibilities as the mothers of the women and men that are to be. Your family should start life with good chances: there is nothing, I have always held, like the infusion of some overseas blood to virilize our English stock. (I was deeply interested in what you said in your letter a few weeks ago about the Mormons.) I only hope that your husband does not bring with him from America that curious survival of the attitude miscalled "chivalry" towards women which is still found among his fellow-countrymen. You, with your up-to-date viewpoint, will in any case teach him to realize that the old clinging,

sex-conscious attitude of a woman towards her husband can lead to nothing but the divorce court. Husband and wife (I know you agree with me) must be comrades before they are anything else : they must not be afraid to speak their minds to one another and stand up to one another if need be—I remember putting this to Harry when we became engaged, and he thoroughly agreed with me.

And now, I do hope that, whether you are married here or in London, you will be married according to the ceremonial of the Book of Modern Prayer. You will excuse my entering into technicalities, but I know you are one of those to whom the shell and the outward forms of religion (quite rightly) do not appeal, so I thought you would not mind my advising you as to the state of the case. The Revision of the Prayer Book, which arose out of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline appointed in 1904, is, since last year, an accomplished fact. Most unfortunately, the Revisers could not, even at the last, come to a complete agreement on all points of detail, and consequently there are now five service-books which have equal authority in the Church, (1) the Book of Common Prayer, just as it used to be, (2) the Abridged Book of Common Prayer, which is the same with the tautologies cut out, (3) the Book of Ancient and Modern Prayer, which is only used by the Westernizers, (4) the Revised Book of Common Prayer, a temporizing document which was highly recommended by all the Bishops and is, as far as I know, used nowhere, (5) the Book of Modern Prayer, which is in use at West Mill. This

last, although its compilers were men who believe that God exists (in so far as it is possible for us to be sure that anything exists, and in what ever sense we can do so) is far better suited than the others for those who, like yourself, have no such definite convictions. It has completely abolished the old marriage-by-capture terminology of the earlier Prayer Book, about " obeying," " honouring " and what not. It is sensible enough to allow for the possibility that, while it is to be hoped the contract is a permanent one, it may quite conceivably have to be rescinded at the close of a period of ten years. It is very important just now that people in a prominent position, like yourself, should use this formula, because so many people attend weddings who do not ordinarily come to Church at all : and we want them to realize what it is that Christians do and what it is that Christians do not claim. I *do* hope you will pardon my troubling you about all this ; but it is as well to look ahead, isn't it ?

Yours most sincerely in the truth,

AGAPE ROWLANDS

Lady Lushcombe,[1] too, was among the first to congratulate me. I was the more touched by this, as she was having great trouble at the time with her fourth husband ; and I could appreciate the kindly thought which induced her to type at all, though the contents of her letter were not precisely cheering :

[1] Previously Mrs. Drake, previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

My precious Opal,—

(You must still let me call you mine, even though this Yankee ogre is going to run away with you) —How to congratulate you on the splendid news which has just been broadcasted here ? I assure you, nobody talks of anything else. Bertha was in here yesterday, and she positively raved about you. We are all so glad that you are bringing your tame bear back to England with you, and look forward with tremendous excitement to the day when you will exhibit him. I do most earnestly hope that you will be happy : I'm sure you deserve to be ; one gives up so much, does one not, in tying oneself up to a stranger for years and years like that. I believe marriage will be good for you, because from having no brothers or sisters you've had a very easy life up to now, and it must be difficult for you to sympathize with all the unhappiness there is in the world. Now you've taken your coat off and come into the ring with the rest of us : more strength to your arm ! You'll find men are more intolerable the more you get to know them ; hopelessly selfish, and quite without manners. The only thing to do with them, my dear, is to disregard them. " Think only of thyself," I was reading the other day in a perfectly fascinating Arabian philosopher : " think only of thyself, and nothing that happens to others will be able to violate thy peace of mind "—I thought that so wonderful, especially as the philosopher (I've forgotten his name) was unmarried, you know. The great thing is, I'm sure, to get all the enjoyment you can out of your romance while it lasts. Simply forget that

the future must bring disillusionment, and plunge yourself in your happiness. And whenever trouble does come, be sure you come straight to me and let me hear all about it : I've not lived forty years for nothing ! Once again, my sweet Opal, all my best wishes to you. I will tell you my own news when you get home.

Your unhappy friend,

CYNTHIA

The very first thing I had done after getting over the first shock of happiness about my engagement was to wireless the news to Juliet Savage and ask her to be my best woman. Her answer was full of her usual good spirits and infectious optimism :

GINGER, YOU ANGEL,—

This is the best for years. I knew you'd go and do it if I let you go careering round America without me. I always thought Wynefryde would go first, but you've got ahead of her. As to assisting at the obsequies, you may count on me. Will it be at Grey ? I should like to have old Rowlands saying, " Wilt thou on the one hand have this woman to thy wedded wife "—or have they given up all that sort of thing nowadays ? Anyhow, I'll mug up the service, and be word-perfect on the night. Now, what's he like ? You might have been more generous in your wireless : " Am engaged to short American with slight squint " would have told me the worst at once. But of course he's tall ? You always hated small men. I believe

you'd be Mrs. Hoskyns by now, living on Boar's Hill and calling on the other dons' wives, if it weren't for that. And pots of money, of course, or he couldn't be "Lord"—what a comfort to have an aristocracy who can be sure where their next meal's coming from! I shall lose no time in telling him about all your lurid past, because I suppose after the second time I've been to stay he's sure to turn nasty about me and say, "My dear, I can't have that woman in the house again; her cigars are too strong: it hangs in the curtains." And then my lot would be an Opal-less one—oh very bad! So it's just as well he should know I have a guilty hold over you. . . . The paper's just come in, with a wirelessed portrait of HIM in it—it's even more hopeless than most wirelessed portraits. They ought really to put "The features, reading from left to right, are . . ." underneath them. You will have sent me a proper one by now. Only I do want you to come back, and tell me all about him. Darling, I *am* so excited.

Your neglected
JULIET

Canon Dives was not slow to resume a somewhat interrupted acquaintance: his letter was, as usual, a masterpiece of diction:

MY DEAR MISS WINTERHEAD,—

So East and West have met; I hope, nay, I am sure, that you have made choice of a suitable partner; I dare hardly hope that you have found one worthy

of you! Pray accept, from Mrs. Dives and myself, the warmest possible felicitations. And now, you will pardon a word or two of sermonizing from one who has watched, with a very real interest, your brilliant career at Oxford.

There is much talk about marriage nowadays which would incline one to imagine, did one judge only by the outward appearance of it, that the old idea of marriage as a Sacrament has disappeared from the modern world. We say no. We say a thousand times no. We say marriage has, if anything, become for our generation more of a Sacrament, a Sacrament in a deeper and fuller sense of the word, than it was for our fathers before us. We hear a great deal nowadays of relativity. Truth, we are told, is relative to the mind of the truth-perceiver. How fortifying, if rightly viewed, is this doctrine! It applies, does it not, to the case of husband and wife as much as elsewhere. To the husband, the wife, to the wife, the husband, seems a paragon of beauty, a treasure-house of wit, energy, and charm: old age comes, perhaps, and the bright eyes are dimmed and the raven hair silvers, and yet, between this loving pair, the ravages wrought by time are unmarked: he is still beautiful and charming to her, she to him. "For old sake's sake she is still, dears, the prettiest doll in the world." What, then, is the truth of the matter? May we not boldly say that the truth relative to their two minds—and all truth, remember, is relative to a mind—is that the man and the woman ARE REALLY the most beautiful pair of creatures in the world? That the honeyed whispers of love, which

to the profane ear would seem to contain baseless flatteries, are nevertheless in a very real sense the Truth? Dear Miss Winterhead, if you brought home to us from America, *per impossible*, the most ungainly of hunchbacks, I for one would still hold it Truth that he was the handsomest of men, because to your Truth-perceiving mind he is so.

When we have gone so far, we may surely go further. Marriage, besides being a Sacrament, is a contract. A contract holds good so long, and only so long, as the essential facts of the situation, in consideration of which the contracting parties bound themselves, remain unaltered. Thus, if I am under contract to water a particular plant, my obligation ceases if the plant dies; or (to put the case more strongly) if a friend of mine hands me an egg, and I promise to put it under a hen and give it, when hatched, the freedom of my fowl-run, my contract automatically ceases if the egg proves to be that of a crocodile. Now, the marriage contract is made between two persons each of whom is to the other, and therefore philosophically speaking *is*, the most beautiful creature in the world. They are married, a shadow grows up between them, there are scenes, difficulties—suddenly they wake up to find that they are no longer in love with one another. He sees her as a vulgar harridan; she sees him as a churlish egotist. What has happened? Why, *the facts have changed*, the essential facts which formed the basis of the contract. He is no longer the same man, she is no longer the same woman. By all means, for practical purposes, keep up the formality of divorce. But a

divorce is only a recognition of something that has already taken place. The contract has automatically expired. Therefore, dear Miss Winterhead, if it should happen (as I hope it will not happen for many, many years to come) that you should find yourself looking at Lord Porstock with other eyes than those you have for him at present, no one will be more ready than myself to admit that you are no longer married to him. I hope that my meaning is clear.

Let us take courage, then, and learn to find in the disturbing movements of our time a deeper and ever deeper significance. I send this with the most earnest prayer that your union will be abundantly blessed.

Yours in a very real sense,

AMPHIBOLUS DIVES

Juliet Savage did not like this letter. She said Canon Dives would argue the hind leg off a donkey. She also said she supposed, according to him, the question of whether a wife was true to her husband would have to be relative to her velocity. I confess I felt even at the time that there was a hitch about it somewhere. I will only quote one other letter, which came to me from Miss Linthorpe's old butler : she had made comfortable provision for him, and he now lived not far from us in Hertfordshire :

DEAR MISS OPAL,—

I hope you will excuse the liberty of me and Mrs. Hodges sending our warmest congrats on the news we have seen reported in the paper. It seems very hard

that poor Miss Linthorpe never lived to see you settled down comfortably. But it's not for us to quarrel with Providence. I hope the young gentleman will settle down with you in England and make you very happy, which you deserve. And don't you be led away, Miss Opal, if you will excuse me mentioning it, by all the talk there is about unhappy marriages and married folks not getting on by reason of incomparability of temper. I may be old-fashioned, but what I say is (and Mrs. Hodges the same) that if you've met Mr. Right you'll *be* right, and you won't ever let anything come between you, as some do. "The world has changed a great deal, Hodges," as Miss Linthorpe said to me more than once, "since you and I went to school, but a man and a woman's a man and a woman now as much as ever, even if the woman does get herself up in trousers and spats" (you'll excuse my mentioning it, but those were Miss Linthorpe's words, you know the way she had). And to my way of thinking a man and a woman *are* a man and a woman, so long as they don't let anything come between them, as some do. I hear over in America they're very free and easy with their marriages, and no sooner married than divorced, they tell me; but I'm sure your young gentleman isn't like that, and won't let anything come between you, which would not be natural considering what you are and how you will always, I am sure and Mrs. Hodges the same, make a good wife to him. So you will excuse an old man that has watched you grow up, Miss Opal, since the old days when you used to come over from Barstoke, sending my warmest congrats, and praying the

Lord to bless you, as he did Rebecca and Rachel and Hannah in the Holy Bible, and Mrs. Hodges the same.

Yours obdtly,
JAMES HODGES

The preparations for the actual wedding were full of difficulty. In the first place, Porstock knew nobody in England, and had forgotten to ask anyone to be his best man. When the omission was discovered, he quite cheerfully suggested his mechanic, and actually asked him: he was, however, a Catholic, and "wasn't sure but the priests would read him out from the altar" if he consented, a possibility of which he seemed to live in permanent dread. However, a great friend of our family, Frank Hopgood (the College of Heralds *did* take him back) consented to act on a rather slight acquaintance, which had sufficed to convince him that Porstock was "one of the very." Then there was the question of where Porstock should stay on the night before the ceremony, since he could not stay with us —this tradition was one which my mother would not hear of departing from, although Mrs. Rowlands proved to her conclusively that it was a survival of marriage by capture. In the end, he stayed with the Combes, and I am afraid disappointed Lady Combe a good deal: she had expected him to be full of nervousness, and even tried, as far as her nature would permit, to rally him archly on his approaching happiness, but found him iron-nerved as usual. She said, for instance, that she supposed he would want to look his

best for to-morrow (I fancy it must have been a bed-time hint), to which he replied that looking your best was nervous work while you were in the kissing and cuddling stage, but he wasn't going to get rattled any about the aisle-walk. Altogether I am afraid he did not win golden opinions at The Pines. But after all, as he said, the point was to " get the parson busy," and he had no patience with details. My mother insisted on " giving me away," a pretty old custom which was even then falling into disuse.

Then there was the question of the form of service. Mrs. Rowlands' Book of Modern Prayer was turned down at once, curiously by Juliet: she declared that she would inevitably get the staggers if I were asked " Wilt thou respect him and show all reasonable deference to him, love, humour, and tolerate him, in sickness (other than permanent insanity) and in health? ": nor was it with much less apprehension that she looked forward to my replying that I would " take him to my wedded husband, in accordance with the terms of the marriage settlement, till death, permanent insanity, cruelty, infidelity, or incompatibility of temperament us did part." Finally we fell back on " The Revised Book of Common Prayer " (highly recommended by all the Bishops), which contented itself with altering " obey and serve " to " respect and co-operate with him," and adding to the final words " so long as ye both shall live " the proviso " until the King shall take other order." When it was explained to Porstock (after the ceremony) that this curious phrase allowed for the possibility of a divorce, he replied that the King

would have to set his alarum clock at three any morning he wanted to take that kind of order—which was understood to indicate his unwillingness that His Majesty should move in the matter at all.

One or two of my friends, all of the older generation, kept up the old practice of giving wedding-presents in kind—Lady Combe, for example, gave me a new form of " sluggard's delight " (Porstock did not go to bed till two the night he stayed with them), which automatically boiled an egg every half-hour, and Lady Lushcombe some beautiful table silver with my maiden initials engraved upon it, explaining that it was " just as well to be prepared for *all* emergencies, my dear." But cheques were already the usual form, and I was able to publish the fact that I had received cheques amounting to £2,600 13*s.* 4*d.* in honour of the occasion. The stupid and invidious habit of itemizing the list of cheques had not then grown up.

Of the ceremony itself I am but an indifferent witness; for, curiously enough, I felt very nervous and fidgety all the morning, and as I went up the church found myself actually turning faint; Juliet restored me to myself by whispering that it was a relic of marriage by capture. I am not going to describe my wedding-dress, for young ladies of forty years on to ridicule and call dowdy. Porstock's wedding-suit, which had been specially made for him in Paris, was (as a silly compliment to myself) of a curious opalescent material which I have never seen before or since. The service was on the whole a simple one, out of respect for the village choir and for Mrs. Rowlands' organ-playing: besides " O

perfect Love," which was of course by that time an official part of the service,[1] we only had " The Voice that breathed o'er Eden " and Kipling's *Recessional.* But, since we were rather long in the vestry doing the signatures, Mrs. Rowlands got tired of playing the Wedding March, and we finally left the church to an extemporization of her own, distantly based on alternate recollections of " The Star-spangled Banner " and " The Marseillaise."

The breakfast afterwards was a very simple affair, as was usual in those days ; the menu did not go over the page, and I doubt if the whole meal lasted more than three hours. There were, of course, the usual interminable speeches, in the course of which Sir Richard produced a very long metaphor about deep-sea fishing, under the mistaken impression that opals came out of oysters, and Porstock distinguished himself by declaring, before an astonished audience, that if they heard of anyone prospecting for the big noise in brides, they had better send them round to him right away. It was all very thrilling and very touching, and Mr. Hodges saying " God bless you ! " moved me, I am afraid, to tears. But there was only one real moment in the day, and that was when Porstock got his hand on the lever, and the autumn glories of Hertfordshire leapt away from underneath.

[1] Curiously enough, this hymn was written by a lady who afterwards became a Catholic, early in the century.

## CHAPTER IX

## LONDON SOCIETY AND ITS FOLLIES

Society is the "head" on the tankard of civilization; if you did not want it, you should not have poured so fast.—HENRICOURT: *Kleptomania*, Bk. IV, Part II, ch. 37.

WE spent our honeymoon in Algiers. The time passed all too quickly, since the office was unable to spare me for more than a month. Print shall not profane these sacred memories. It is enough for my readers to know that early in the next year, 1945, I gave up the active part which I had hitherto taken in the management of the business, and became something of a sleeping partner. We took a house in Chiswick, which had the advantage of being a central as well as a fashionable quarter. We bought Greylands, and added to it a little, taking great care, however, not to spoil the character of the house—our needs, indeed, were comparatively simple. Two covered courts, a ferro-concrete drome, and a new smoking-room for my women guests proved, in the end, to be all that was necessary. It was at Greylands that my two sons were born, Francis James, the second and last Lord Porstock, in 1946, and Gervase Linthorpe, who never lived to succeed him, in 1947. But I have, perhaps, spent too much space already in purely domestic chronicles; my readers will be expecting by

now some account of the world of London as it was forty years ago. Did I say " the world " of London ? Only a very tiny bit of it, I am afraid ; for we all live in small worlds, and perhaps in some ways there is none smaller than that which is called " Society." Yet, for a later generation, it is easy to understand why Society, in this sense, should be of particular interest. For, after all, it is the leisured and the more elaborately differentiated class who reflect most faithfully the fads and the follies of their time.

The fads and the follies ! I remember bluff old Lord Billericay, when we were having one of those terrifying smart conversations at Edith St. Briavel's, being called upon to contribute his definition of what one meant by Society ; to which the only answer he would give was, " I have no respect for a Society which doesn't see that Tommy Lieberts is a fool." And yet, when I look back at the salons of those days, and think how the beauty that thronged them has faded, and the wit and inspiration that then seemed so novel has become flat and insipid, and the serious questions which we discussed have either been platitudinously answered by now or have ceased to be questions at all, I sometimes think the only thing that lives about us is our follies. For these are only the pastime of a moment, and, passing with the moment, they escape by their very briefness of duration the desecrating hand of time. I suppose we were foolish. Manners, language, and even thought had become artificial, as the result of a long spell of European peace and prosperity : I suppose it is always so until a

war comes to waken us up to a sense of realities. Let me try and remember, then, some of the charming fools I knew.

The people with parlour tricks! Perhaps the most extraordinary of these was Algy Fearon, whose sole accomplishment was to giggle. When he was young, it was treated as a disease; by inoculation when the inoculation craze was in vogue, till his poor little system (he was only eight at the time) was running all over with cachinnococci, as I think they called them —but nothing would stop Algy laughing. Then he went to a mind-cure man, who I believe tickled him unmercifully in the hope that he would have enough of it that way—but nothing would stop Algy laughing. Finally he made a virtue of necessity, and took his degree at Oxford without being sent down more than twice, and came up to London to go into business. To his intense surprise, he became the lion of the hour. Hostesses scrambled for him, and almost got to the point of writing on their cards "to hear Mr. Fearon laugh." About half-way through dinner, he would break down with no warning whatever, and roll from side to side in agonies of merriment—and every one else had to join in. You couldn't help yourself. He went out to South Africa afterwards, but I never heard that he was cured.

And there was Irene Hopgood (Frank Hopgood's sister), who was a princess of make-up, and would never go out anywhere except in a disguise. It was very exciting work asking her to a dinner-party, because you never knew how she would arrive: I have known

her dress up as a waitress, and I have known her come through the window in short skirts pretending to be a burglar ! And there was old Lady Frances Holly, who still did " knitting " and " embroidery," and carried about a large bag with her containing the materials of her craft. And Dick Crawshall, who still rode one of the old bicycles that you propelled with your feet ; one day, for a bet, he rode it all round Selfridge's, the assistants looking on quite calmly and imagining that it was some new child's toy of which he was giving an exhibition for the benefit of customers. And Blanche Engelstein, who carried about with her a little bag of what she called " compliment cards," which she presented to the best-dressed woman in the room, and the maker of what she thought the best remark of the evening, and so on.

The people with affectations and fads ! I think it was Georgina Grosheim who introduced the idea of having your teeth carved, like ivory. It would have been painful to have this done in my father's day, when people wore their own teeth ! The vogue had quite a long run, though I never went in for it myself. The old Duke of Michigan, who was a great dandy, used to have a different set for every day in the week, all very elaborately carved. Children were so fond of looking at them and asking him " What's that story about ? " that he said he always went home from a children's party with a jaw-ache. Somebody tried to introduce coloured teeth, but these were never a success. Lady Jacynth Drysdale was one of the few who were bold enough to appear in them, and even she stopped when

she heard of Archie Lock's remark about her : " I can't bear it when that woman laughs, because it always reminds me of what I dropped last night at snooker." The tattooing fashion did not come in till after the forties, and at first it was only done in small spirals round the arms. I never cared for tattooed backs ; but they were so common at one time that when it went out, late in the sixties, we all had to take to high-necked dresses again ; till then, we wore those low necks you see in the old *Punch* pictures—I mean in the evening. Another unsuccessful experiment was made in the fifties, when women took to cutting their hair quite short, like men ; I have still a chromograph of myself with my hair like that : but it was never becoming, and I fancy it was only an excuse when the doctors condemned it as unhealthy—there was a malicious story that Adèle Hopps, the American beauty who afterwards became Duchess of Lutterworth, bribed Dame Mary Sitwell, the most famous scalp-specialist of the day, to issue this pronouncement.

There were affectations of language, too, such as the custom (which originated, I believe, in the Smethwick family) of putting in a G wherever two vowels met at the end and the beginning of words, so that you talked, for example, about " a stuffy gatmosphere," or " The India Goffice." And there were affectations of dress which we have, perhaps fortunately, forgotten. In the early fifties it was quite common to see a Parisian lady going about with live birds in her hat, or an English dandy wearing bracelets, or an English lady of fashion with a " beauty patch " of black on her cheek—a revival

from the seventeenth century. The mercy of these things is that they go out almost as quickly as they come in; I daresay our grandchildren will laugh at our powdered wigs and our trailing dresses!

There were still interesting old survivals from an earlier period in costume. I remember old Lord Sandham still going about in a starched collar, and, I rather believe, starched cuffs. He was very proud of himself for still having his own teeth, which he used to attribute to the fact that he had never chewed gum in his life, or rather, not since they broke him of the habit in his nursery. He was proud, too, of never having been up in any kind of aircraft: and the story is told of him that when he first came up to London after the first moving platforms had been put in in Piccadilly and elsewhere, he and an equally countrified friend walked for about a quarter of an hour up the slow platform, thinking that they were getting to their club, when they were really standing quite still! I can still see Sir Mark Adgate, too, with his watch in his waistcoat pocket, tied on to the end of a gold chain, with which he used gravely to take it out whenever he wanted to know the time. Mrs. Grant (better known as "Phyllis Meadowes") was the last woman I ever saw wearing ear-rings. I believe my own uncle, Lord Trecastle, was the last man who appeared in fashionable society with a beard and moustaches. In his generation, of course, to be clean-shaven meant a considerable personal effort: the depilatories then known were either harmful to the health or painful in their application, and it was only by scraping with a sharp razor every

morning that the unwelcome growth could be removed. But indeed, I have lived through extraordinary changes in the matter of toilet elaborateness. Towards the end of the thirties, owing, I believe, to the great number of Anglo-Indians who came back after Home Rule was granted, the bath became a perfect obsession, and hardly any men thought they could get on without washing all over with water and soap twice a day. It may be imagined how slow and cumbrous this process was! And yet all this time we never used anything but a vacuum cleaner for our carpets and curtains—as if carpets and curtains were more entitled to the benefits of civilization than Man!

We had also (as what fashionable Society has not?) our dare-devils; the people who were always taking on eccentric bets and issuing fantastic challenges. I suppose physical courage among men tends always to decline; or is it that the objects over which we are called upon to exercise physical courage differ from one generation to another? I suppose, if you come to think of it, helico-driving needs nerve; and yet we would shrink from some of the tests to which our fathers put themselves. I have seen, as late as the forties, a man jump a five-barred gate on horseback.[1] One of the most reckless men in London was John Ducie, who accompanied a friend's helico from London to Paris hanging on by his hands, and on another occasion drove his old motor-bicycle through a hundred-yards belt of some new gas that was being tried at Aldershot,

[1] This was Augustus Hemmerde, afterwards famous as a dramatist.

holding his breath all the way. He also challenged a friend to see how many volts of electricity each could stand, and I forget what fantastic record he achieved. The curious thing about him was that he did not in the least care how high or how low the stakes were: one heard that his London-to-Paris flight was only for a bet of five pounds. Dame Louise Merewether was another of these reckless challengers: it was she who shot the tide-trap water-race at Greenwich in a canoe, and, as Archie Lock said, all but got turned into electric power.

And then there were the sheer follies that were devised from time to time by adventurous hostesses; a sad witness to the jaded palate that demanded them. There was Angela Nuneaton's midnight picnic in Hyde Park: all the guests had to climb over the railings, and there were a good many accidents: Archie Lock looked round him and said that dresses were being torn very low this season. It was only the bursting of a champagne cork that attracted the attention of the police; and even so very few of us were caught. Then there was a rather macabre breakfast party, organized by Trevor Hodgkins, who was something or other at the Zoo; we had it in the hyena run on the Mappin terraces, to the intense interest of the regular inhabitants. I didn't care for it much; laughter at breakfast always seems to me out of place. I think the jolliest parties we had were the more ordinary picnics on Hampstead Heath: my mother always imagined that these must be desperately vulgar, because in her younger days Hampstead Heath used to be the playground of the

democracy! It was Sybil Linklater, I think, who started the idea of revolving ball-rooms, which caught on so about this time; I never could see much fun in it myself. There used to be a story of Sir A. F. (I will not give his full name), who was all too much addicted to the liquid pleasures of the table: it was said that he set out one night after dinner for Sybil's, and by mistake got into the next house, where there was also a dance on; he proceeded to dance there the whole evening without discovering that the floor was not revolving!

But I suppose if there is one thing more foolish than the deliberate follies of Society, it is the way people take up strange hobbies of the intellectual kind—movements, crazes, philosophies. Not that so much intellect is wasted on these as used to be wasted on cards when they used to play games of skill: I remember, for example, the Petheringtons, who were very old-fashioned, used still to play "bridge": and by that time they could calculate so exactly what was bound to happen in each game that they always threw down their hands after the second round. But it is the clever people, and the clever women especially, in Society who seem to become the prey of all the most outrageous impostors. There were still Spiritualists in those days, and if all they said was true they had got far beyond the stage of merely evoking the spirits of the dead: they held commerce, in a quite matter-of-fact way, with the souls of people yet unborn, who appeared to have an exact knowledge of what was going to happen to them when they came to earth. I attended a séance once at which we had a

most fascinating interview with a future Emperor of Transylvania, who proved at the end of the evening to be under the impression that it was somewhere in China. The Spiritualists also discovered a special kind of control in the fifth degree (at that time you always had a series of seven " controls " between you and the person you were speaking to), which they called *pani's ;* these were said to read the future like a book. But when they got the Derby winner wrong three years running, the last time with a horse which was not even entered, their public credit was somewhat blown upon. People used to be very superstitious, too, in those days : I remember, for example, that Louise Merewether would never take her helico out if she had seen a lame man that morning ; and a friend of hers, whose name I forget, told me that she never went to church, but she always kissed her hand if she met a clergyman, because it brought her good luck at oogle.

But, without reckoning actual superstitions, what impostors we used to encourage ! You would get a card to tell you that Sapphire Countess of Leek would give an At Home to meet Dr. Breder—Dr. Breder was a little German-American who believed that you could live for ever if you ate a raw tomato before each meal. Or you would be invited to hear a lecture in some fashionable boudoir from Mrs. Spink, the Eugenist, who wanted to introduce a system of scientific totemism into England to regulate marriages : I never could understand myself how the principle worked. Or you would call at a friend's, and find that you had come in in the middle of a long dissertation by a coal-black

man in a frock-coat who was explaining the essential superiority of Kaffir to Christian ethics. I was not fond of such movements myself. But, having told so many stories against other people, I must give some account of a very amusing *faux pas* I myself made, which caused many of my friends to cut me dead for a long time and almost made it necessary for me to retire from London Society altogether.

I was having tea with Angela Nuneaton one afternoon when there was a whistle at the tube, and when she had listened to it she asked if I minded a very curious little man coming in, called Holbeach Griggs, who had invented a system by which you could read people's thoughts as soon as you looked at them. I said, foolishly, that it sounded rather a rag, so we unslipped the door-catch, and a moment or two later the dictaphone announced Mr. Holbeach Griggs. He was a weedy-looking little man, with nothing mysterious or " Have-you-seen-this-man ? " about him. I was introduced, and said I supposed it was a sort of lip-reading he did, by watching the expressions on people's faces, like Sherlock Holmes in the Watson story. He said not a bit ; his system depended on immediate thought-transference : and the fun of it was that the more the other persons tried to conceal their thoughts, the more clearly you could detect them, " because of the inhibition," he said. It was foolish of me, but in those days, when we were still quite new to the idea of carrying a wireless installation in your umbrella, anything seemed possible in the way of communication with other people : and besides, if what the man said was true, it

was obviously a good thing to be first in the field and get ahead of your friends with it. So I not only asked the wretched little creature to give me lessons, but invited him to come round to Chiswick for one of my Fridays and show off (I was always at home at Friday luncheon in those days). He said he would come, and I went away and forgot all about it.

The worst of it was that Angela Nuneaton had heard me say that I was going to take lessons, and the little man said two lessons did the trick. So she went about telling everybody (she always told everybody everything) that I had taken lessons and everybody must be very careful what they thought about while I was present. A day or two later I got a nasty shock when I met Georgina Grosheim at the theatre, having quite accidentally booked seats next to hers. She just looked round to see who it was, and then bolted from the theatre, although it was only half-way through the first reel. Of course I couldn't understand it at all at first ; and when I dropped in to supper afterwards at Lady Humbledon's, neither of the men next to me spoke a word to me, and the girl on the other side of the table looked away and blushed whenever she met my eyes. She came up to me afterwards, and said, " Oh, Lady Porstock, you must really excuse me for thinking such dreadful things at dinner, but I couldn't help it, I really couldn't ! " Then of course I saw what was happening, and heard that she had heard from Angela ; so I assured her that I'd no notion what she was thinking about during supper. To which she replied, " Oh, Lady Porstock, it's so sweet of you to say that," and

went out of the room—I could see at once that she didn't believe me.

I don't think it would have been so bad, only Archie Lock, who always had a terribly misplaced sense of humour (he paid for it, poor fellow, when his father disinherited him), saw his chance of scoring off us all, and proceeded to make it known that he had been to Griggs (whom he'd never met in his life), and had taken lessons; he added that Griggs had told him he had a strong natural gift for mind-reading. Then he used to go about, like a silly ass, starting with surprise when he passed some casual stranger in the street, and saying "How awful!" He met Georgina Grosheim before she had heard about this, and he greeted her with "Oh, Georgina, don't think that!" upon which (he used to declare) she made a dash for the very fastest part of the moving platform and was whirled away down Bond Street. I met him at a dinner-party, or rather I sat about four places off him, and I noticed the fool caught my eye several times and smiled at me, but never realized what he was up to until he came to me afterwards and said, "Thanks so much, Opal, that was a ripping conversation we had at dinner, wasn't it?" At which almost everybody present looked daggers at us, and the man who had been sitting next to me turned scarlet.

It was terribly awkward for me. I never saw the horrible little man again, and Angela didn't know his address; nor did anyone. The more I swore I had never taken lessons, the more people thought I was trying to spare their feelings, and (probably) that I

was saying the most dreadful things about them behind their backs. I remonstrated with Archie, but he was in one of his most idiotic moods, and wouldn't talk to me at all—just made faces at me, as if I was understanding exactly what he meant. Then there began to be trouble, because somebody, Heaven knows who, repeated a piece of scandal about a woman I knew, which we all thought quite baseless, and she came to hear of it : upon which she marched straight off to me and said it was a monstrous breach of trust for me to have repeated what I saw her thinking about the other day, because she was thinking it strictly in confidence. Several things happened like that, which reduced me to despair, and besides, I began to get such a very bad opinion of my neighbours. Archie Lock swore that he had looked hard at a man in his club one day, and the man immediately left for South America.

If only people would have taken it the other way, and tested me, they could have seen at once that I had no unusual powers ; but they were all too frightened, especially because Angela had repeated the idea that it was the thoughts you tried hardest to hide which became most obvious to the mind-reader. Then people began coming to me very quietly and asking me either to tell them Mr. Griggs's address or to give them lessons myself. And when I explained that I couldn't do either, they took it very badly : and one friend of mine, who was always very jealous about her husband, cut me dead ever after she failed to get the " secret " out of me. Of course my real friends believed in me, but it is surprising how few one's real friends prove to be

on such occasions! Porstock was away in America, and I was too proud to ask him to come back. What amazed me was the credulity of the most intelligent people about it. I was actually asked to a very important Foreign Office dinner, where I was put next to the American ambassador; and I was asked afterwards, very confidentially, what he had been thinking about!

Archie Lock got tired of the situation, and suddenly advertised that *he* would give lessons. He got as many as two hundred names straight away. He meant, I gather, to tell them all that they were fools and that the whole thing was a hoax. And then suddenly he had a bad helico-crash, and was in hospital for six weeks, during which I had to bear the brunt of it alone. Both my servants left me, and I found it impossible to get new ones, until, very good-naturedly, some nuns offered to come in and "do" for me. I cannot explain what a relief it was when at last news came from America that Holbeach Griggs had been arrested for obtaining money under false pretences. He denied the charge, but they turned the "inquisition-machine" on to him, and it registered him guilty. I think he may well have been the only person that machine did examine accurately, for it was always a fraud to my mind: anyhow, if anybody ever deserved such a condemnation, he did! Then he confessed, and I am glad to say that Society pardoned me. But even so, there were a dozen or so of my acquaintance who had given themselves away to me so badly that they would never meet me again.

Well, I hope we learn from our follies. Certainly, if we do, London in those days was an admirable school. It must not be supposed that, because I have filled up a space of eight years in my life with such a recital as the foregoing, I was spending all my time in vanities. For the most part of my time I was at Greylands, learning to love and respect my husband more every day, and busying myself about the training of my two boys. But it was, so far as real work or real achievement goes, a sort of doldrums in my busy life ; and I will leave it to a fresh chapter to explain how in 1953 my life became once more a life of activity, and of more important activity than hitherto, because my unassuming personality had to come before the public eye.

## CHAPTER X

## MY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

The Party System has its critics; it will always have its critics. But you will not abolish it; you can do so only by being false to your own principles, and forming an anti-Party Party.—LORD HOPEDALE.

I HAD not, up to this time, taken much part in public affairs even on a small scale. I was indeed a member of the Licensing, Aviation, Game-preserving, and Afforestation Committees of the Hertfordshire County Council, and had lent the support of my name, rather than (I am afraid) of my personal endeavours to such unconnected objects as the Life-plane Society, the Nervous Hospitals, the Humane Cattle-killing Association, the I.F.L., and the Criminals' Protection Society. It was in 1952 that circumstances, rather than any choice of my own, forced me to the front in connexion with the crisis that then occurred in the policy of the I.F.L. The whole thing is a matter of history, and there is no need to go into it in any detail here: it is enough to say that I felt at the time (and subsequent history has, I think, justified my view) that the whole existence of the League was at stake, and that it could only justify its existence by extending its activities on the lines which are now familiar to every one. There was considerable opposition, and many local secretaries resigned, but the party organized by Juliet Savage and

myself was upheld by the central body, and the subsequent newspaper agitation only succeeded in making its promoters ridiculous.

In all this I had no intention of thrusting myself into prominence ; I acted from a plain sense of public duty. But the proceeding had aroused a considerable amount of interest ; and at this precise moment the Democratic Committee were looking about for promising young candidates, known to be in general sympathy with their programme, who would be likely to carry weight at the polls in the general election that was then recognized to be impending. It was a surprise, both to Porstock and to myself, when I got a confidential letter from the Chief Mechanic of the Democratic Party urging me to contest Manchester N.W. (3) in the Democratic interest in the event of an election. He pointed out to me that if I accepted the offer at once I should only have to pay the ordinary premium of £3,000, whereas if I waited till the dissolution actually took place the premium would have risen to £5,000, even if the outgoing Government had not by that time hurried a measure through to increase the rate.[1] The financial consideration, it will easily be understood, was not very important to us, but the urgency of Sir Hubert Gunter's tone (he was a personal friend of ours) left me little choice but to accept. I was accordingly nominated Democratic candidate for the constituency in March, 1953, seven months before Lord Hopedale went to the country.

[1] This, it will be remembered, actually happened, and the raising of the premium to £7,500 was one of the chief counts against the Tory Party.

It is necessary for me, I am afraid, at the risk of going over some ground which will be familiar to my more well-informed readers, to go back a page or two in political history, in order to explain the complicated and critical position that had arisen at the moment of which I type. Up to 1931 political history is very fully documented, owing to the decision of the then Labour Government to publish all the secret documents which it inherited both from its Tory and from its Cabal [1] predecessors. This publication has thrown a flood of light on the internal politics of the country, especially during the latter part of the Five Years' War and the few years immediately following the outbreak of peace. Opinions will no doubt differ as to the propriety of the Labour Government's action : there is a certain feeling of eaves-dropping when you read, as you may read nowadays, set out in the cold print of a history book, the confidential S.O.S. calls of a sorely harassed minister, with a vast number of conflicting claims to meet. The result, in any case, is that half-an-hour spent with Murdock's *Twenty Years of Diplomacy* or Hammond's *George and his Critics* will put the modern reader *au fait* with all that preceded the accession to power of Rosenstein's Labour Government in '31. Over its own private difficulties the Labour Administration did not show a similar frankness, nor did its successors, whether Tory,

[1] My father always used to speak of this as " the Coalition Government." The name Cabal was invented by later historians to distinguish it from the 1974 Coalition ; the names that suggested it were those of Churchill, Arthur (Balfour), Birkenhead, Austen (Chamberlain) and Lloyd (George).

Independent, or Democratic, see fit to avenge themselves in kind. The full history, then, of all this period remains to be written : I can only resume the facts as they are generally known for the benefit of readers to whom (as so often happens) the events to the Boer War are far more familiar than the movements of their own times.

Lord Billericay, who took an active interest in politics in his young days, used to tell me that the Labour Government, in his opinion, might have lasted sixteen years instead of six if they had only let racing alone. The truth was that Charles Ropes, although he seemed the only possible leader of the party when Rosenstein went into his cure, was a doctrinaire of the old Nonconformist type. The result was that when the Horses Utilization Bill was thrown out and the Government resigned on it, there were bills for the disestablishment of the Church, universal secular education, the taxation of town sites, the abolition of the House of Lords, and the demobilization of two-thirds of the army, all waiting to pass their third reading and all regarded as non-contentious measures. In the very hour of its achievement the Government had gone out, leaving no permanent memorial of its tenure of office except Indian Home Rule and the Entente with Russia. Its publication of our treaties with foreign powers, from which such a commotion was expected, proved after all to be a false alarm ; for the terms of them were so inconsistent with one another that they were immediately treated as forgeries.

It was a far more difficult question who was to take up the reins of power which had been thus abruptly dropped. Lord Hopedale's efforts to form a Conserva-

tive ministry were at once greeted with the threat of a strike from 138 separate industries. The Liberals vainly appealed for a lead to six different statesmen, all of whom refused to leave their retirement. The attempt to form a new Labour Government, which would disown Mr. Ropes and his Horses Utilization Bill, the " Sporting Workers " as they were called, proved a fiasco. People were seriously questioning whether the affairs of the nation would not have to be openly administered by the Crown. And then began that unique political expedient which has gone down to history with the short-lived dictatorship of Sulla and the Jesuit Government of Paraguay.

I see that Mrs. McKechnie, in her *Reminiscences*, attributes the suggestion to a letter in the *Daily News*. I am sorry to have to supply a correction to a work otherwise so distinguished by accuracy ; but I happen to remember the circumstances with peculiar exactness, because I was at Oxford at the time, living in a whirl of political activities such as one only makes for oneself at Oxford, and consequently in a better position to give first-hand evidence than a writer who is speaking of a period when she had not yet left the nursery for the schoolroom. For about a fortnight on end the *Daily Mail* had a series of letters saying, " Dear Sir, Why do you not save the country by taking its destinies into your own hands ? Yours etc. INDIGNANT ENGLISHMAN," and so on. At the end of this time an article in the *Daily News* (not a letter) made the suggestion that newspaper proprietors should become a ruling caste according to the size of their circulation :

but any one who read the article in the spirit in which it was written could see quite clearly that *it was all meant for a joke*, a satire on the wearisome correspondence which was being printed by its contemporary. That the *Mail* took the initiative in treating the suggestion seriously is evident from the fact that its circulation at the time was nearly half a million ahead. It was the *Mail*, too, which first proposed that the less popular dailies should combine with the more widely sold ones, so as to avoid group Government : and it is noteworthy, that the *Evening News* fell in with this suggestion two days before the *Star*.

Mrs. McKechnie's whole account of the matter seems to me to be something of an *ex parte* statement. It is quite true in an ordinary way that " one does not take in a paper unless one agrees with its politics," but a list of the " insurance claims " paid at that time to readers of the more prominent organs is a valuable commentary on the doctrine. That the Independent Government left behind it a quite innocuous record may also be admitted, but it must be admitted on the other side that it has left behind it no single important legislative bequest. It disappeared without leaving a ripple upon the surface of National politics.

It remained for Lord Hopedale's Administration to reinstate the Party system. Some have held that they showed vindictiveness in their management of the situation, but it was a situation which needed strong measures. Party Government is surely not possible without party funds, and these had to be recruited somehow. The old system of " bought peerages " had,

as Lord Millthorpe said, " done its work " ; in fact, there was a glut. The Americans, too, were insisting very strongly that the purity of the aristocracy should be safeguarded. There seemed nothing for it but to place a slight premium on all elections to Parliament, which was almost negligible when compared with the honourable status given by a seat in the House of Commons, quite apart from the business advantages. At the same time the new arrangement discouraged, once for all, the appearance on the hustings of candidates who were only anxious to promote some doctrinaire fad of their own, and had not enough sense of discipline to " toe the line " with either of the great political parties. There was another novelty in the Parliamentary Elections Act, which it is difficult to imagine as having been dispensed with by earlier Governments—the provision, namely, by which any member who votes against his own party has thereupon to seek re-election.

But the raising of the premium from £5,000 to £7,500 was a piece of frank electioneering, and it is difficult to see how a statesman of Lord Hopedale's honourable record can have made himself a party to it. The Party in power had always the advantage in finding candidates, since it was possible to guess with some sort of accuracy what programme they meant to take to the country ; whereas the Opposition, since their programme was seldom worked out in detail until a week before the elections, had to ask their candidates to take their policy on trust. Since the Democrats were, on the whole, men of a more moderate income than the Conservatives, it seemed at one moment that it would be

well-nigh impossible to fill the coupons. As it was, old Sir Arthur Bates had to appeal to his constituency from a bath-scooter, and Mrs. Farnham, though the doctors said she might wave her arms, was not allowed to speak.

In those days it was customary, at election time, for candidates to travel down to their constituency and address the electors by word of mouth. This was indeed necessary, for the cinemaphone was not yet properly perfected. The speech of the evening was, of course, delivered by the leader of the Party by this means, but it had the disadvantage that any loud interruption from the audience could prevent a part, sometimes a large part, of the cinemaphone record from being heard : and at that time (it seems hard to believe !) it was impossible to reverse the cinemaphone without starting the record all over again ! I confess that, to my mind, the personal presence of the candidate has always seemed an advantage ; it stimulated a local interest in politics such as you rarely see nowadays ; nor was it possible for the electresses to complain that they had chosen their representative without ever really knowing what he looked like, having only seen what a cinema director could make him look like at a pinch. And there is something, after all, in the personal touch, in the direct intercourse between the member and her constituents : the wax dummies of to-day can indeed chuck babies under the chin with as much precision as we used to, but they cannot win the heart.

Anyhow, I travelled down in person to Manchester N.W. (3). I had never been in Manchester before, and admired the city from the first moment I set foot in it.

The municipal buildings, noble examples of that Waterhouse Gothic which we vainly try to imitate nowadays ; the moving platforms in Market Street, said to be the fastest in the world : the wireless installation on the Cathedral, which records all the movements of German theology several hours ahead of any other English centre : the marble cupolas of the Synagogue in the Bury New Road : the " super-landing-stages " on Kersal Moor—all spoke of a city full of vitality and unceasingly awake. I had been fortunate enough (owing to my early candidature) to secure the Midland Hotel as my Head-quarters. This enabled my supporters to refresh themselves, between business hours, with unlimited games of tennis, water-polo in the large swimming bath, a continuous day-and-night cinema in the theatre, continuous concerts in the Winter Garden, and continuous cocktails at the American Bar. An enormous sky-sign over the roof invited the public to elect " a Lancashire lass for a Lancashire Borough "—this was a bright thought which occurred to my head agent as soon as he realized that the Linthorpes had property in Westmorland.

The Parliamentary Elections Act had already abolished the vicious system by which candidates used to take pledges, i.e. to promise their support beforehand to this or that measure in deference to the wishes of the electorate. As Lord Hopedale finely said, it was a system which " stifled conscience, muzzled freedom of speech, hampered the operation of salutary afterthoughts, and left the Government free indeed to interpret, but not free to direct, the will of a civilized

nation." (His great speech on Parliamentary Elections is still shown nowadays, though the film is somewhat marred through the head and shoulders of the statesman being slightly fogged throughout.) I have been told by old Parliamentary hands that the relief afforded by the abolition of "pledges" was inconceivable. In elections previous to that of 1953 they used to be subjected to an elaborate catechism as to their intentions over this or that question of public policy. It meant almost uninterrupted wireless communication with head-quarters for more than a week; and even so it caused great difficulty when head-quarters, as was naturally liable to happen, changed its policy as the election proceeded. With the best intentions in the world, it was often almost impossible to satisfy all the demands made upon you from different quarters by a hundred conflicting "leagues," "associations," and organizations of all sorts. Further, if you were successful in your candidature, it meant that for at least six months after your election you were liable to be cross-examined by your constituents as to why your vote in the House of Commons had not been in strict accordance with the intentions you had expressed at an earlier date in quite different circumstances. It made the individual member individually responsible for the policy of his party leader, in a way that is to our minds fortunately unthinkable. "They expected a feller," Tommy Lieberts complained to me, "to remember which jolly old way he had voted and explain why the jolly old deuce he had done it."

As I say, I escaped this vicious legacy of an earlier

Parliamentary theory. But it was still customary, in my time, for deputations to call upon the candidate and urge upon her consideration the claims of their various interests. My constituency was full of Jews and Catholics, and their denominational schools were, then as now, a constant source of difficulty : there was the inevitable rumour that the Democrats intended to reduce the wages of denominational pupils. There was a local murderer, who had bombed his wife and children in an attic : several charitable deputations were loud for his reprieve, while several others seemed equally bent on his electrolysis. The employees of a large cellulose firm had gone on strike without being able to show possession of the statutory minimum of funds—there was the question of these being reinstated : and so on. Naturally, the complaints were only received by the dictaphone, but the mere effort of shaking hands with all these people was considerable.

I shall never forget a giant meeting that we held in the large hall of the Catholic Schools at Higher Broughton. My readers will realize how intense was the political excitement of the moment when I say that, although the building was designed to hold 3,000, it was more than half-full. The clapping, in those days, was still mostly done by hand, so that the volume of it hardly represented the full enthusiasm of the audience. The Chairwoman, Dame Horatia Philpotts, rose first and expressed in the usual way our gratitude that Mr. Holroyd, the leader of the Opposition party, had been prevailed upon to speak to us to-night. There was no need to remind her audience how well Mr. Holroyd had

deserved of his country, or how his services had been recognized by friends and foes alike. It was unfortunate that Mr. Holroyd could not be present with us in person, but it would easily be understood that at such a moment as this the time of a public man in such a position was very valuable, and, after all, one could not be everywhere! (Actually, Mr. Holroyd was on the Riviera.) However, we should have the advantage of hearing his own words and seeing his own gestures—a benefit for which we were indebted to the unconquerable march of Science. Dame Horatia then sat down; the lights were put at low pressure, and the well-known figure of Mr. Holroyd appeared on the screen, amidst a deafening applause of the rather wooden quality our old thorybophones used to produce.

He proceeded to tell us, with his well-known clutching gesture, that while he had had many proud moments in his political career, none had been prouder than that at which he rose to address an audience so enlightened and so broad-minded as ours, in a political centre of such unique importance as this. We had met at a crisis in the history of our nation. Great issues hung in the balance, to be decided once for all, and to carry with them, in accordance with that decision, the dissolution of our Empire or its reconstruction on a nobler, a fairer, and a more permanent basis. (Here the gramophone was stopped for a few moments, and the statesman's face was enlarged on the screen, to give us the full benefit of his expression.) There were some, there would always be some, who were ready to cry "Halt!" at the moment of victory, and to arrest the march of

progress, if they could, in mid career. He hoped that those were not the feelings with which we had come into the hall to-night. For himself, he was convinced that we stood on the threshold of a newer and a fairer world. (Here a voice interrupted him with " What about McClosky ? "—the bomb-thrower who was then under sentence of execution.) He naturally took no notice of the interruption.

Unfortunately, a certain section of the audience were impatient to hear his views on this particular issue, and began to sing " And shall McClosky die ? " in a very loud and threatening voice. It being impossible to disconnect the cinemaphone all at once, a large part of Mr. Holroyd's sentiments were inaudible. The tumult subsided when the lights went up, but, as it proved, only temporarily. The film was no sooner released than a dastardly crowd began to hurl a varied assortment of missiles at the figure of the venerable statesman ; which, however, fortunately did no damage, as the pictures were being thrown direct on to a concrete wall : an ink-pot left a slight but disfiguring blotch somewhere in the region of Mr. Holroyd's waistcoat. The rowdy element, however, were not satisfied with this ; several of them made an attempt to rush the cinema operator. They were thwarted in their purpose and sand-bagged by the police ; but the operator seemed to have lost his nerve, and from that time onwards the film was anything but a success. Again and again it was clear that the gestures on the screen were not accurately timed to correspond to the words ; again and again the attempt was made to readjust the

timing, but always unsuccessfully. At last, at the end of an impassioned period, my leader was seen to refresh himself with a drink of water. But, to our surprise, the glass which he took up in the picture was an empty one, and a moment later, to the vociferous delight of the whole audience, it became painfully clear that the film had been put in wrong end on ! I cannot profess that the meeting after that was a wholly serious one, or that my speech was anything but a frost by comparison. Such contretemps are the penalties which attend the pioneers of Science !

On the whole, my electioneering experiences were not very thrilling. My opponent, Sir Philip Hazelbright, made a good stand, but he was not able to stem the flood of popular feeling. The country was tired after nine years of Tory rule, and everywhere showed the intensity of its feeling in the most unmistakable way : in more than one constituency more than half the voters on the register went to the polls. It must be admitted, too, that business losses had hit Sir Philip hard, and his side were not in a position to pay the expenses of their voters as handsomely as ours. The result was a foregone conclusion ; yet it was estimated that upwards of 1,000 people assembled in front of the Town Hall to hear the two large gramophones there telling each other that they had fought the contest in a fair and sportsmanlike manner.

I was recalled by serious news from home at the very instant of my triumph. Our younger son, Gervase, had contracted whooping cough severely, and was lying dangerously ill at Greylands. I should explain that in

those days, before Hoscher discovered the autococcus—a discovery for which humanity will owe him a permanent debt of gratitude—it was necessary to have one's children inoculated separately for all the leading diseases, from chicken-pox and measles to sleeping-sickness. This was usually done at the age of three, as soon as they had recovered from the tonsil and adenoid operation. Gervase's inoculation, we now remembered, had never seemed to " take " very satisfactorily, and we bitterly regretted that we had not had it repeated. I found that Porstock had called in a chest-doctor to attend the cough, and a mind-doctor to cure the whoop ; the latter, mindful of my own experiences twenty years earlier, I got rid of on the spot. He had been making the poor child sit up in bed repeating to himself, " It is very rude to hiccough in company." We had a very anxious fortnight, and the chest-doctor, Mr. Dolman, said he thought he had never come nearer to losing a fee. But in the end our boy's strong constitution triumphed, and a month in the Fens put him on his legs again.

I must record, in connexion with this illness, a clever saying of our elder boy, Francis. Meeting Mrs. Rowlands in the hall one day while his brother was very bad, he asked " if it would be right to pray that his brother might get well." Mrs. Rowlands, who had her views on this as on most other points, said perhaps it would be safer to pray to God that His will might be done. The first time he met her again after Gervase's recovery he said to her very seriously, " Now, Mrs. Rowlands, ought I to thank God for doing His will ? " For once, Mrs. Rowlands had to own defeat.

## CHAPTER XI

## IN PARLIAMENT

See, where her court an agelong Silence keeps !
Tread softly, Stranger—here a Nation sleeps.
MAINWARING : *Elegy on the House of Commons.*

TO be a member of Parliament was in those days, of course, a more exacting claim upon one's time and convenience than it is now. The meaningless tyranny of tradition still made it impossible to be represented in any circumstances by a proxy, and no effort had been made to relieve the burden of legislation except the institution, once a week, of " voting night " : the second and third readings of all bills, which had previously been liable to surprise the House at any odd moment, were now restricted to Wednesday evening, between the hours of nine and eleven. Sunday was, I believe, the day originally chosen, but it was found that this would interfere with too many private engagements. But the duty of presence in person still hung about our necks ; and it is with some pride that I can boast never to have missed a voting night during the six years of my experience as a representative of the nation. On the other side, it must be admitted that the writing of a letter to the newspapers every month was then not a duty, but only an honourable understanding. Still, it will easily

be conceived how the burdens of my new dignity interfered with the leisure of my quiet life at Greylands.

Every morning a large crate would arrive, containing the records of all the speeches made in the House the previous day. I always made a point of having them all turned on ; and if I were called away from the room to interview the cook or for some similar purpose I would always leave Porstock behind me to hear what was said and to report on anything which had struck him : if this seemed sufficiently important, the dictaphone would have to be reversed till the important passage was reached again. Then, if I were down to speak myself the next day, I would have to shut myself up for an hour or so in the dictaphone room, till a perfect record could be secured. Even a question that had to be asked would be a matter of anxious care. I cannot imagine how the Ministers of those days can have found time for all their engagements, when questions had to be answered into the dictaphone, before the invention of the present mechanical process. Really, we are spoilt nowadays !

Nor were the incidental duties of a Member of Parliament inconsiderable. Now I would be writing my autograph in the prizes to be distributed at my old school ; now I would be at the telephone opening a bazaar ; now I would be trudging out, in all weathers, to the wireless installation at the back of the house to unveil a statue, to lay a foundation-stone, or (for I was still known as a sportswoman) to kick off at some Manchester football match. Now and again my

secretaries would come in to consult me as to how they were to answer some troublesome constituent, whose letter they did not feel capable of answering on their own responsibility. There were Committees, too, of the House, one of them (the Kitchen Committee) actually demanding my personal presence. I also became, as was natural, directress of a good many companies, and it became necessary to build on a board-room at Greylands in which to entertain their Committees.

But, although the life of an M.P. was already a busy one, it was not even then an eventful one. Day followed day, and the press of business which had at first seemed so strange and so insupportable fell, as things will, under the enchantment of routine. But there was one period, in the spring of 1956, when the calm waters of Party politics were suddenly disturbed, and that through my agency. The "duodecimal crisis" which was a matter of so much talk and notoriety at the time, is almost forgotten nowadays, and I hope I shall be pardoned for dealing with it somewhat fully, since I was myself the centre of the storm.

The facts were, briefly, as follows. In 1929 the Conservative Government appointed a Commission to enquire into the possibility of introducing into England the decimal system of coinage, weights, measures, etc. Its sittings were interrupted by the accession of the Labour Government in the early thirties, which, among its first and most unpopular actions, drastically cut down the expenses allowed to the members of Royal Commissions. "It comes to this," said Professor

Drywater of Aberdeen, " that if I want to serve my country I shall have to serve it at my own expense." Under the Independent Government the Commissions were revived, but little interest was shown in this particular enquiry. It was when the Conservatives returned to power in '44 that the stimulus of public interest made the Commissioners redouble their efforts, and in less than ten years they had produced a series of recommendations which are still on record.[1] The shilling was only to count ten pennies, the half-sovereign and the " fiver " being retained at their present value in shillings as the units of gold coinage. There were to be ten inches to the foot, three and a third feet to the yard, and a thousand yards to the mile. The hundredweight would contain its exact 100 pounds, and the ton would weigh twenty-five hundredweight, or a hundred quarters—and so on. The scruple, the noggin, the chaldron, the hogshead, the gill, the pipe, and the rod, pole or perch disappeared altogether.

Mr. Holroyd was not of that narrow, factious spirit which would refuse to adopt a measure because that measure had been first suggested by an opponent. It was characteristic of the man that, when he was elevated to the peerage, he selected FAS EST ET AB HOSTE DOCERI for his family motto. The programme was adopted, not in the form of a private member's Bill, but with the full backing of the Front Bench. The whole weight of the Tory opposition was immediately thrown into the scale against it. Readers of *Punch* will

[1] The records are, however, somewhat scratched as the result of the fire at Cippenham in '73.

remember the cartoon of Lord Hopedale defending, in classical costume, the walls of Troy Weight against a serried rank of circular shields. The issue was a critical one; the battle was to be fought, not on the merits of the case, but as a test of Party strength. The by-elections had, for some time, been looking ominous; urgent "whips" were broadcasted by the Mechanics of either party; the Tories appealed to popular prejudice by asserting that they were fighting for the tankards of old England; and in many constituencies, it is believed, the whole proposal was obscurely identified with some measure of Temperance reform.

In an evil hour for my party, I had studied (it will be remembered) the Theory of Statistics at Oxford, and had sat at the feet of that erratic genius, Arthur Tonks. It was his favourite thesis that the whole civilized world was groaning under what he called "the decimal illusion." Through a disastrous legacy of barbarism, he would tell us, we had all agreed to fix our "round number," after which we started out on "double figures," at the number of fingers with which Providence had endowed us. "Ladies," he would tell us, "we are not barbarians, and we do not count on our fingers." By his way of it, the multiple of three and four, which we have thrust on, as "twelve," into the teens, ought to have been the round number of our calculations. He had therefore composed a system of counting of his own, which ran "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, tonk, tink, ten," and was printed for short as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, *, &, 10. By this system, which at Oxford he always hoped to see

universally adopted, and later, in his retirement, came to believe had actually been universally adopted, the whole business of calculation was to be infinitely simplified. His was the passion of a fanatic : he would date a letter, not " Sept. 22," but as " Sept. 1 * " (pronounced " tonkteen "), or tell you that the Battle of Waterloo had been fought in A.D. 1513, or announce his nine-thirty lecture as due to begin at " tink twenty-six."

How saddening a feature it is of that strange process we call " education," that while we are still in the pupil's status we laugh at our tutors and make fun of their pet fads, and yet in later life, when those tutors are dead and can no longer accept our tardy homage, come back to the fads we once derided and make them our own ! In this matter of coinage reform, I was determined that we would have no half-measures : we would not blunderingly imitate the clumsy practice of Continental nations. If we were to have reform at all, we would have reform on the right lines ; " tonk " and " tink " should find their way into every schoolboy's arithmetic book. If there were to be ten pennies to the shilling, then a penny should be change for tinkpence, and twopence should be change for tonkpence : if we were to have ten inches to the foot, then an inch short should be tink inches and two inches short should be tonk inches. I wrote a letter expounding and defending this principle to all the daily papers, all of which refused to print it, except the *Manchester Guardian*, which had little circulation in the metropolis. However, I was in a position to snap my finger at the dailies :

Juliet Savage was now editing the *Spectator*, and she was at one with me in my present determination. Together we organized a violent campaign, reviving as we did so delightful memories of the *Bilston Hall Rocket* in early days. Poor Miss Montrose, long since gone to her rest, how she must have felt for Mr. Holroyd, attacked by the same two venomous pens that had once marred the peace of her quiet seminary!

My protest, which I had not communicated before to any of my Parliamentary colleagues, took the political world by surprise. The first I heard of it was a letter from Sir Hubert Gunter, the Chief Mechanic of the Democratic Party:

DEAR LADY PORSTOCK,—

*I hope none of our people have been worrying you about your very interesting letter to the "Spectator," which I have not yet had time to read. The truth is, a silly report has grown up to the effect that you intended, not merely to abstain from voting on the Weights and Measures Bill, but to associate yourself with the Opposition. I hate troubling you, but you know what an awkward moment it is for many of us—a short letter to the papers denying the imputation would, we all feel, have a good effect. I enclose a draft of such a letter for your signature, and beg to remain,*

*Sincerely yours,*
HUBERT GUNTER

My reply to this letter was one which was intended to leave my meaning open to no possible doubt:

DEAR SIR HUBERT,—

*I can quite understand that my letter, appealing, as it does, primarily to the mathematician, should have failed to arouse your curiosity. But I am sorry to say that you have not been in any way misinformed as to the scope of my opposition. The subject is one on which I feel very strongly, and I am prepared, if necessary, to jeopardize my political career by seeking re-election in the interests of whatever party seems to me to represent most faithfully the highest aspirations of our great country.*

*Yours sincerely,*

OPAL PORSTOCK

This letter drew a reply, not from Sir Hubert, but from a far more responsible quarter. Mr. Holroyd was absent at this time, conducting some very important negotiations in the South of France, and Lord Brede, who led the Party in the Lords, was in charge of certain matters of vital urgency in California. But it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer herself who continued the attack :

MY DEAR OPAL,—

*We know one another well enough for me to confess* at once *that I don't like your scheme of playing billy with the multiplication table : my job is hard enough, without having to go to school again and do my sums afresh. But you also know me well enough to know that I should not let such merely* personal *considerations weigh with me if I felt that your proposal could be dealt with on its own*

*merits, as a contribution to that advancement of the human genius which we all have at heart.*

*But you will excuse my saying that this proposal of yours does not stop short at that. It is not content to revolutionize the whole of our arithmetical method. It is a challenge to the Government, thrown down at a most* anxious *moment. It amounts to a calling in question of that whole delicate system of Party Government by which the affairs of the nation have for* centuries *been conducted. If a private member is to adopt a line of her own, in complete disregard of the programme for which his Majesty's Government stands, you must see for yourself what a* dangerous *precedent will be set up. Such a principle will undermine that whole spirit of loyal co-operation and* esprit de corps *to which Ministers have to look for their support in matters of urgent national moment. I am sure that you are sufficiently in sympathy with us on more* important *subjects, such as the Protection of the Hottentot Industries and the Improvement of London, to feel that no disagreement over points of* detail *ought to prevent us pulling together shoulder to shoulder. As a matter of personal friendship, I need not remind you how* prejudicial *an effect your present attitude might have upon your chances of obtaining a coupon should you seek election in the Democrat interest in future Parliaments.*

*What lovely weather we are having!*

*Yours most sincerely,*

PULBROOKE

I have mislaid somehow the copy of the letter which I wrote in answer to this, but it cannot have been a very

satisfactory one, for almost immediately afterwards my operator was rung up in the middle of the night to take a message from Lord Brede. He had, I fancy, not been put in full possession of the facts, but merely asked to send me a strong remonstrance which would make me repent of the lone hand I was playing :

*Deeply appreciate sincerity of motives which have contributed difficult situation. Impossible expect agreement great fundamental principles ensure seeing eye to eye matters of detailed application. But higher considerations than those mere party surely bid sink private differences co-operate generously in great cause. Implore you take no steps likely to jeopardize harmony Ministerial camp during crisis fraught grave national peril. No one more ready than Prime Minister or self to give full weight any criticisms administration when business Empire permits return. Know can depend strong personal loyalty already evinced hundred unforgettable instances during past years. Spirit of Gladstone not dead yet. ac.ac.ac. Brede.*

But I had not yet reached the zenith of my notoriety ; my revolt was actually to evoke a personal appeal from Mr. Holroyd himself ! I confess that I felt a twinge of something like remorse when I realized that the great man, in the midst of his multitudinous affairs, had found time to write with his own hand (so far as the signature was concerned) to one whom he must have regarded as an erring disciple :

*In the train, near Cannes.*
*June* 18, 1956.

MY DEAR LADY PORSTOCK,—

*I am sure you will not think me intrusive if I write to congratulate you most warmly on the lucid exposition you have given in the "Spectator" of a most intricate problem, which has always had great interest for me. The daily papers out here all had translations of it—I am afraid it will be a long time before our Press rivals that of the French in its appreciation of scientific technicalities. If only I had known earlier that you felt so strongly on the matter, it might have had a profound influence upon the drafting of the legislative proposal which now lies on the table of the House of Commons. Certainly, if it had happened a few years earlier, your claim to be appointed a member of the Royal Commission could not well have been overlooked.*

*But facts are facts, and I am afraid that the measure in question must seem to you a very half-hearted solution, which has not grasped the nettle, or plucked the heart out of the controversy. You must think us slow-coaches! Well, you will pardon an old friend of your father's for saying that you are still young, and the young are always for whole measures—they will not have the wings of aspiration clipped. I know it is asking a great deal of you when we ask you to follow the lagging footsteps of us older men: and yet it is a lesson we all have to learn. I daresay you will remember old Lord Perse? He once said to me a thing I have never forgotten: "If you can't get all you want, want all you can get." I quite see that our present proposals can only appear to you in the light of a preliminary instalment of those great changes you would*

*like to see effected. But may we hope they will have your support, if only as an instalment? The country at large, I fear, needs educating before it will greet your own more far-reaching scheme with the consideration, and, I may say, the sympathy it deserves. But, as you well know, "we will not cease from mental strife": we are pledged to make England a fairer and a happier land than we found it.*

*Meanwhile, although your woman's talent for logic makes you see ahead of others, I hope you will allow yourself to be guided in this matter by a man's intuition. Masculine intuition is so valuable sometimes! Please remember me most kindly to Lord Porstock; he will be back in England by now?*

*Yours sincerely,*
JAMES HOLROYD

It was, I confess, not without a tear in my eye and a quivering typewriter that I answered this kindly letter as follows:

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,—

*Thank you very much for your most kind letter, whose complimentary expressions are, I am afraid, far in excess of anything my poor intelligence deserves. I quite understand that the line of action I am adopting is a very unusual one. You, on your side, will understand that I would not be acting in this way if I did not feel deeply about the point at issue. That point is not, as I conceive, merely one of mathematical convenience. It is simply the question whether the constituents in any electoral division*

*are to send a representative to Westminster, or a dummy. If the country wished its political life to be suspended by the sleep of an eternal compromise, it should not have allowed women into Parliament. I have been told from several quarters that the subject of my opposition is unimportant compared with the fact of my opposition; in short, that I am a test case. I believe it, and I am glad of it; it seems to me that the nation is drifting perilously near to the position in which it would be governed by a Cabinet instead of a Parliament.*

*Yours sincerely,*
OPAL PORSTOCK

I need hardly say that the Press was very amusing at my expense, but its comment was not always particularly intelligent. Indeed, the only sensible criticism I remember was a cartoon in which I was represented as an exhibit at a freak-show, with six fingers on each hand. But the greater part of my critics seemed to have entirely missed the point at issue. They all seemed obsessed with the idea, either that I multiplied three by four into ten, or that I multiplied five by two into twelve, or both. The words " tink " and " tonk " naturally caught on with the humorists of the day; indeed, I believe a revue entitled " Tink tonk " was still running at the outbreak of the Great War. Some of my serious critics were even more entertaining, and I was severely reproved by more than one religiously minded correspondent for upsetting the eternal laws of number, ordained for us by a wise Providence when it gave us fingers and toes. But I was not to be moved by any

kind of opposition, and the support of Juliet Savage prevented the public from laughing me out of court. In the end, as my readers will probably remember, the situation became so acute that the Prime Minister actually came back from France and held a Round Table Conference at Chequers. For a time it looked as if no *modus vivendi* could be arrived at, but at last statesmanship triumphed, and a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the relative merits of decimal and duodecimal numeration, which is still sitting to-day.

I need only mention one other of my public activities, which remains a legitimate boast; it was a Private Member's Bill, brought forward by myself, that procured the erection of the great statue of Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street. I pointed out that London was now the only European capital which had no statue of the kind, and the plaque on No. 221B Baker Street was a quite inadequate recognition of the famous detective's services. The question whether he had ever existed did not affect, or ought not to affect, the feelings of veneration with which we regarded him. When the bill passed, I was elected a member of the Committee which was to decide between the various designs sent in. The prevailing taste at the moment was Futuribilism, but none of the artists then in vogue seemed to have treated his subject adequately. Several of them represented the head merely as a square block of stone, on the ground that all attempts to imitate the features in sculpture were a violation of the canons of Art. Another, on the same ground, represented the figure as

strictly globular. I am glad to say that it was at my instigation the Committee chose the design sent in by Wrightman, then quite unknown, but destined to become famous as one of the leaders of the neoclassical school in the sixties. The conception is a noble one, and if some have found fault with the pipe as out of keeping with the classical draperies in which the figure is represented, it is not for us to complain. " We must approach Art," Burstall used to say, " as a goddess demanding a sacrifice ; and the victim she asks of us is the Actual."

Well, the old days of Parliament are dead ; and we no longer see St. Stephen's presenting the appearance it used to present on " voting nights," when helico after helico landed in the great square outside and legislatress after legislatress passed into the building to record her decision upon the affairs of the nation : when, by a quaint old survival, they used to bow to one another as they passed, while the opposing platforms bore them into the opposing lobbies ; or when, on the occasion of some important speech, as many as five hundred auditors would assemble in the dictaphone room, to catch, in awestruck silence, the very tones of a Hopedale or a Holroyd before they passed into the receiver. Those of us who belonged to those older Parliaments will look back with some regret at the pomp and circumstance which used to attend legislation in those days ; and perhaps even suspect that some of our modern indifference to political issues is due to the disappearance of that pageantry which is so dear to English hearts. There is still an old-world enchantment that lingers

about the House itself: and you might almost fancy that those voiceless figures which sit there now, admirably as the Tussaud family has caught the likenesses of our present-day legislators, were the ghosts of a distant past, when the voice of a Burke would stir his contemporaries to indignation and to endurance, or the receiving funnels vibrated to the delicate soprano of a Pulbrooke.

## CHAPTER XII

## HOME LIFE

The word " home," albeit of Teutonic origin, has in great measure outlived the conception it was designed to express.—DR. DIVES: *Life of Malthus.*

AND now it is high time that I returned from my political reminiscences to the chronicle of our simple life at Greylands. After all, what historians will value (if they value anything !) in such a book as this is not the record of great public events, even when these can be narrated by one who took part in them; but the story of how we lived, what we thought about, what were our daily cares and interests. One of the happiest recollections I have of those days is that of our iron wedding in '54. It was not at that time customary to hold the religious ceremony over again, with a formal renewal of consent; but we made merry on the occasion, entertained our friends, and, of course, received presents. Our friends were extremely generous on this occasion, and I was especially touched by the letter with which Archie Lock enclosed his cheque: " Really, you are one of the most economical friends I have in the way of wedding presents! Look at Cynthia Stockdale [1] now—she gets married so often

[1] Previously Lady Lushcombe, previously Mrs. Drake, previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

that I'm thinking of making out a banker's order for her." Still more did I appreciate a flitch of bacon, bought and addressed at Dunmow, over the Essex border, " with respectful compts from J. Hodges."

The accommodation at Greylands could be regal when it liked, and we managed to put up no less than fifteen guests for the ceremony. Mrs. Rowlands, rather sobered now by her experiences in a violent campaign against the daily nearing menace of Disestablishment, had still enough of her old spirit left to compose a special form of service for the occasion. It began, I need hardly say, with " O God, our help in ages past," as a tribute to the long lease we had had of married life : then there was a Psalm or two appropriate to extreme old age ; then it strayed off (as far as I could make out) into the Baptism of Adults and the Form of Prayer to be used at Sea ; then we had the prayer for the High Court of Parliament. Then there was " Peace, perfect peace," then an extremely embarrassing sermon from Mr. Rowlands, who talked of our marriage as if it was the one fixed landmark in a world of continual change and progress ; then a translation of " Ein feste Burg " in which the words " And though they take our life, Goods, honour, children, wife, Yet is their profit small " struck one as hardly felicitous. And finally the *Te Deum*, with what Mrs. Rowlands called " the characteristically mediæval parts " left out. Juliet Savage asked Mrs. Rowlands whether she couldn't have put in " My old Dutch," but this was lost on her—Mrs. Rowlands did not read nineteenth-century literature.

I remember Porstock, who had fortunately been

able to get back from America just in time for the ceremony, surprising us all by appearing in the old opalescent suit, now ten years out of fashion, but, I am glad to say, still fitting round the waist. I remember Lord Billericay telling us in a speech that in his young days they didn't have any iron weddings ; one wedding was iron enough for them. I remember Archie Lock telling us about a man whom he congratulated on his future bride answering " The same to you and many of them." I remember my two sons, one on each side of me, doing good work with the champagne, and Juliet telling me that I looked like the mother of the Bacchi. I know I cried a great deal, but I seem to remember only the things which made me laugh.

The education of our two children was now a constant care to us. Francis, though never a strong child, was already at his multiplication table (not mine !), and even little Gervase was learning his alphabet. Their names were down for Eton, since the Education Act made it impossible for them to be brought up at home. We were, I think, strict parents ; Francis, for example, to the day he went to Eton was never allowed to take the helico out except in fine weather ; neither was given permission to smoke till the age of twelve, and they were made to go out for a walk on Sunday afternoon if they had not been to church. A still more unusual embargo—neither of them was allowed to come into the boudoir except to ask a question or make a request of myself or some one else who was there. The difficulty of this was that they were not easy to find when visitors came to tea, until I arranged that they

should not go out in the afternoon without the portable wireless: on receipt of the call "CD" ("company downstairs") they had to come back at once to the house, and if there was a further call "CC" they went up to put on clean collars. Then they had to burst into the boudoir saying, "Mummy, may we go and shoot the gold-fish?" or some such formula, to which I would answer, "Not just now, dears, come and look at some pretty pictures." It was thus always possible to show our family treasure to visitors without the appearance of any unnecessary restraint.

Their governor was a charming young Rhinelander called Schultz. He was very highly recommended to me by friends; he had, they told me, taken a particularly good degree at his University. When I interviewed him in London I asked what he took his degree in, and he said very seriously "Pædagogy." I asked whether he could play the piano; he said no, he had given all his time to pædagogy. I asked whether he knew French; he said no, only pædagogy. I began to become interested in this curious subject, and asked him what pædagogy was about. He brightened up at once, and said, "It is very simple; you trust the child, he love you." I wanted to know how long his course had been; he said six years. I said that seemed rather a long time; he said most unfortunately his course had been cut short. I asked him what he would have studied if he had been able to take a full course, he said pædagogy. I was beginning to get quite hypnotized by this time, and hastily engaged him.

The boys, who were very high-spirited (taking after their mother, I am afraid my readers will suggest), were not prepared to take him seriously. Francis, who took the helico over to meet him at Broxbourne, tried to frighten him by looping the loop as they came back; which was very naughty of him, because he knew it was not allowed to loop the loop even when by himself. Herr Schultz hung on grimly, trusting Francis, which nobody who knew him would have done, for the boy was a very poor driver. Next day I suggested an hour for lessons: "When they like," said Herr Schultz. I thought it might be well to neglect their likes and dislikes in the matter, but this was apparently unpædagogic: "You not do what he not wills; you trust him, he love you." The boys decided to go off to the pictures at Buntingford: Herr Schultz accompanied them, sat behind them, and in a slow, level voice instructed them on everything they saw. "It was worse than Mrs. Rowlands lecturing on Venice," Gervase said afterwards. Finally they broke away and went to the meet; Herr Schultz followed, contributing a stream of information on the habits of dogs. They went bird's-nesting, and Herr Schultz proved intolerable on the subject of ornithology. Next day the boys volunteered to have a fixed hour for lessons on condition that Herr Schultz would leave them alone the rest of the day, and he came to me beaming: "You trust them," he said, "they love you." I am bound to say he was a most successful teacher, using no threat to enforce discipline except that of his company. They rather liked "old Stilts" too, after a time; and with

his quite unimaginative, wholly serious manner he became a general favourite—only Lady Combe could not approve of him, because he was "a Roman." "And a German Roman, too, my dear"—as if that form of the infection were more likely to be catching. They had no other governor till I sent them, at the ages of ten and eleven, to a preparatory school at Bournemouth.

I was induced to do this by hearing that Dr. Tulse, the head-master of this establishment, was particularly successful in giving home-bred pupils those instincts of discipline which would be expected of them at a public school. His method was at the time an unusual one, though I believe it has been imitated since. It was based on the well-known work of Professor Krausenberg of Jena, "The Education Myth." The thesis of the book, it will be remembered, is that the motive-force of the boy-mind is an opposition-loving reaction from the teacher-stimulus. Try to get a boy interested in something and he will immediately become interested in something quite different, to which his attention will inevitably wander all through the hours of class. Our mistake, says Krausenberg, has been that we always set out to teach the child what we want him to learn, with the result that he always learns something else. Fired with this discovery, Dr. Tulse started a school at which all educating should be conducted by what he called "the indirect method." He would go into class and read out a funny story by Billman or Harcourt Clynes, and his class would sit round him surreptitiously studying Dante or Sophocles under the desk. At least

he said they did. The walls of the class-rooms were plastered with all sorts of useful information about history and science; and Dr. Tulse's assistants had orders to say at frequent intervals, "Don't sit there staring at the wall, look at your books," with the result that the pupils always stared at the walls, "drinking in information," the head-master would enthusiastically say, "not through the œsophagus but through the pores." Some particularly instructive maps and plans were turned with their faces to the wall, and there was a strict school rule against looking at them: on the subject of these, one was told, any of the boys could have passed an examination any day. In the library there was one shelf very high up on the wall, so that you could only reach it by climbing on the chairs, which were covered with a very delicate and easily-spoiled kind of silk. This shelf contained Latin and French grammars, classical dictionaries, and the like; and there was a label on it to say "No boy may touch these books." They were never out of circulation. Sometimes a master would come up to a boy and whisper into his ear Boyle's Law, or the rules for doing conditional clauses in Greek, and tell him to be very careful not to pass the information on, as it was strictly private and not quite delicate. The whole institution would talk of nothing else for a week.

The discipline of the establishment was managed on the same lines as the teaching. During play-time, no boy was allowed within a radius of half a mile from the school, with the result that no boy ever strayed outside it. All games were forbidden, and were played

enthusiastically. You were liable to be flogged if you were found in bed before ten : the masters, creeping in on tip-toe, used to find all their pupils fast asleep by half-past nine. Cigarettes were served out after all meals, and were secretly thrown away by the boys, who complained of them in their letters home as " filthy muck." Very plain food was served to the masters ; but as the masters never came into the dining-room till a quarter of an hour after the boys, this plain food had all disappeared by the time they arrived, and they regaled themselves later on with the masterpieces of a French *chef*, which the boys had contemptuously thrown under their seats. The passages were wrapped in a cloistral stillness ; if any master heard so much as a whisper there, he would come out and say, " Make more noise there, please," and all would be quiet once more. There was a large bath-room labelled " For the use of Masters only," from which sounds of splashing came all day long. If two boys quarrelled, they were ordered to fight, and they immediately settled their differences by arbitration.

I am glad to say that my own boys got very bad reports all the time they were there. Again and again they were " swished " for going into the Chapel, tidying their desks, opening their windows at night, wearing black clothes on Sunday, touching their caps to masters, doing Swedish drill before breakfast, taking books out of the classical library, keeping silence in the dormitory, and otherwise breaking the rules of the establishment. Once they very nearly got expelled for deliberately mowing the lawn. It was a wonderful

school. I am bound to say, on the other hand, that they paid their pupils very little,[1] but high fees were an advantage which Porstock and I could easily afford to forego.

It was just before Francis went to Eton that I lost my dear mother. Her health had been failing for some time, and she had been obliged to go to the Campagna, Sierra Leone and other health resorts under doctor's orders, but it was plain that she could not last long, and she came back to Greylands to end her life quietly there. Towards the end her memory failed rather, and she would think she was back in her childhood's days: she would walk upstairs without taking any notice of the lift, or take a pen out of some old drawer and absent-mindedly begin writing her letters by hand. Her end was a very peaceful one, and Mrs. Rowlands, who attended her in her last illness, said she had never met such touching faith. Our friends were very kind to me in my great sorrow, and two Cabinet Ministers flew back behind her ashes from Golder's Green to West Mill.

Francis' name had been entered for Mr. Townshend's house at Eton. This was in '41, only three years before my marriage, so he was lucky to be able to get in so early. Mr. Townshend was dead, and his successor, Mr. Cubitt, had retired, but I was told that the spirit of Mr. Frodsham's house (as it then was) remained excellent. Although it could not compete with the

[1] The boys did not get any fees at all for staying at the school during the holidays, which, as it was against the rules, they nearly always did.

classical tradition of Downside, and had yielded to Tonbridge the palm of merely numerical superiority, Eton was still the premier school of England. The reputation which it had enjoyed under " flogging Headmasters " like Lyttelton had not deserted it in our more humanitarian days. I was a proud mother when I went down for Francis' first Fourth of June ! Old Lord Billericay, I remember, was with me, and it was interesting to note all the changes that had happened since his time, and the indignation which they provoked in the breast of that unbending old Conservative. I remember, for example, that " Pop " were now allowed to wear calf shoes ; that notices were put up in the right-hand as well as in the left-hand window of the School Bookshop ; that the counter in " Little Brown's " had been moved back six inches in order to make more room for customers ; that the boys were allowed to wear " change " at " absence " ; that the railings round the statue of the Founder in School Yard had been renewed ; that the procession of boats started a quarter of an hour earlier than it used to ; that the façade of the School Hall (a fascinating building, in the florid style of the early days of this century) had been cleaned ; that the choir boys no longer dressed in Eton suits ; that the old " danger signal " for motors on the Slough Road had been removed—and so on : none of these symptoms failed to confirm in Lord Billericay the gloomy presentiment that " the place was going to the dogs." I confess that for myself, in spite of the great changes which had swept over it, Eton remained a link with the distant past, and the mellow brickwork

of the Warre Schools seemed to breathe out the enchantments of the Middle Age. We went to " Speeches," of course, and these had a wonderfully old-world atmosphere about them—the knee-breeches and silk stockings of the performers, the immemorial dust of the School Hall, the selections for recitation (including a scene from " You never can tell " and a Maeterlinck piece whose name I have forgotten) all conspired to make you feel as if you were back in the nineteenth century. I think the most modern poem that was recited was Edgar Pirbright's Hymn to the North Sea, written when the first tide-trap was opened, the one that begins " Now, you damned scrimshanker, get a move on," and I suppose Edgar Pirbright was dead before Wallace K.S. was born !

Both my boys were very happy at Eton. Many old Etonians were anxious about the future of the place at the time ; for Dr. Sandridge had only just assumed the Headmastership, and his was said to be a reforming temperament ; there was a rumour that he intended to abolish " Sunday Questions " and to shorten early School by five minutes—proposals which put everybody in arms against him. But the school seemed to prosper none the less. Both my sons (who were said by my friends to take after their mother in an extraordinary way) became good footballers, and Gervase only just missed his Eight.

Meanwhile, Greylands, though I suppose I ought not to boast of it, became famous for its hospitality. More than one Conference with foreign diplomats has been held there, and from Saturday to Monday we nearly

always had a full house. I have, curiously enough, a complete record of our visitors, for my Mother, among her old-world habits, retained a great devotion to the principle of " The Visitors' Book," in which our guests were expected to write, not only their names, but some quotation from a favourite author, or, if they preferred it, some original composition. Artists would occasionally draw pictures in it. I have the unwieldy volume before me now : let us take a peep through the pages of it. Here is an original drawing by Lennox the Futuribilist, " Lady Porstock's new helico." The machine is, of course, represented just after a bad crash—no, this is the right way up to hold it—and the mechanic is seen as a confused mass of drapery a few yards away. Those who only know Lennox as a painter of the *macabre* would be surprised at this revelation of what he could do in his lighter vein. And a few pages on, strange contrast ! there is one by Charmant in the neo-classical manner, " Lady Porstock as Artemis "—not drawn, I am glad to say, from the life. Visitors' Books make strange bedfellows.

Then here is poor Cynthia de Brignard's [1] quotation, such a sad one ! " All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." I see that she came back again later after she had married that American man, Tarporley : she seems to have been in a more cheerful mood then, for she writes, " If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again." Then there is Archie Lock, not in his best form,

[1] Previously Lady Stockdale, previously Lady Lushcombe, previously Mrs. Drake, previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

but the helico was waiting, I remember, as he wrote it:

> This is (please do not get a shock)
> The signature of Archie Lock.
> If you forge it on a cheque,
> You will get it in the neck;
> Nothing causes so much rancour
> In the bosom of my banker:
> "Cheques," he says, "we cannot pass; it's
> No dam use; there ain't no assets."

Georgina Grosheim, of course, tried to be funny and pretended that we were a village inn: "Have no complaints. The cooking is all that can be desired, the attendance excellent, and the management kind and thoughtful. Shall come here instead of Margate next year." That is just on the opposite page to a very heavy quotation put in by Lady Pulbrooke: "Philosophers are for ever asking what is the true basis on which the welfare of a commonwealth depends. They fail in their search because they do not look near enough. The welfare of a commonwealth depends upon the qualities of its citizens, on kind hearts and honest faces." I suppose it must have been Juliet Savage who wrote "My dear Holmes! How on earth . . ." at the tail of this quotation; she was always "ragging" my Visitors' Book. Then there is Lord Billericay in his sportive vein—it must have cost the poor old gentleman a sleepless night, for humorous verse was not his natural medium:

> There was once a good fellow called Porstock,
> Who had of misfortune a poor stock,
> He'd an excellent life,
> And a rattling good wife,
> And a safe so full up that the door stuck.

It was a pity that Canon Dives should have been our next guest, but of course he had to take his turn, in spite of a slight change of note : he put in an extract from one of his own sermons : " Hospitality is enjoined on us, as we know, in the Scriptures. We even read that through its exercise some have entertained angels unawares ; and though it is probable that the word here translated ' angels ' should be more correctly rendered ' messengers,' the point of the aphorism is the same. Duty is, however, a word which has tended to fall out of our modern vocabulary, perhaps unfortunately, for after all the life which has no guiding principle is a tedious and frequently an ineffective one. But, my dear sisters and brothers, if we cannot cultivate hospitality as a duty, at least let us cultivate it as an act of politeness, or shall we not rather say, of friendship. After all, there is one hostelry which awaits us all alike at the end of our long journey." Juliet Savage, I see, has appended the words " Dives, when you and I go down to Hell," a quotation, I think, from Belloc. And next to that is Blanche Engelheim's charade :

> My third is a wife makes her husband my first
> And keeps him away from my second :
> My whole is a town, though with Temperance cursed,
> Where wives by the dozen are reckoned.

Then there is a characteristic scrawl : " Thank God, they taught me how to write at school. Otherwise I should be in a hole. Tommy Lieberts." But I must not go on wearying my readers with all these trivialities. Let me finish with Lord Hopedale's quotation, some clever lines from Mainwaring, a poet who was hardly

known at the time when they were copied in my Visitors' Book.

> The world goes on; whither, we do not know;
> Whence, we've forgotten, it's so long ago:
> Scientists ask "Since when?"; the Blessed cry
> "Till when?"—God knows, and only God knows why.

Or, stay, there is one other extract I must record, if only to show that my roof has housed an Archbishop of Westminster. Cardinal Smith came just after Lord Hopedale, and he wrote what I think he said was the motto of some Elizabethan Catholic: "Praeterit figura huius saeculi; fides Catholica manet."

It was on the 18th of June, 1963, that my great loss fell upon me—so great, that I do not even yet know how to write about it. My dear husband set out on his helicopter for France, expecting to be absent for about a fortnight. The day was somewhat threatening, and in the afternoon a thunderstorm, which in some unaccountable way had not been predicted by the Weather Office, swept across the Channel. It must have interfered both with his engines and with his wireless; and no doubt the descending apparatus, which in those days was very imperfect, was unreachable or unworkable. No word was ever heard of him, no trace ever found of his descent. I felt inconsolable in my loss. In all the nineteen years of our married life my husband had never been away from home for more than six months at a time; I had depended, perhaps more than I knew, upon his strong presence and his unfailing interest in my affairs. He left behind him two sons,

neither of them destined by Providence to survive the Great War. When these were taken from me I was, I thank God, in a better position to bear the blow: I knew more, by that time, both of what is meant by suffering, and of what God meant a man and a woman to be to each other. *Beatus vir qui implevit desiderium suum ex ipsis*—if I had known that, I might have children now to comfort my grey hairs.

## CHAPTER XIII

## GREAT MEN OF THE DAY

Every artist is his own masterpiece.—BURSTALL.

IN beginning this chapter, I very nearly fell into the old mistake of saying "I suppose young people don't read Dickens nowadays." It is curious how generation after generation of us seniors fall into that trap. Miss Linthorpe said it to me once, when I was in the schoolroom, upon which I offered to submit to a Dickens examination, and passed it with flying colours. I said it myself to Francis one day, when he was lying on the floor with a book, and he held up the book, which was *Martin Chuzzlewit*. So I will make no apology this time for talking of Mrs. Leo Hunter as if she were a character familiar to my readers. She was a real old ady, who lived at Ipswich (I think) and had some phenomenal number of children, and wrote verses quite as bad as the "Dying Frog." But indeed she was not one woman, she was every woman—every woman who has sufficient station in the world to be able to choose her own company. We all want to collect lions—none the less since we ourselves began to be Managing Directresses, and Q.C.'s, and Members of Parliament. So I am not ashamed of having hunted the lions in my day; and I have kept them for a separate chapter—

just a few of them, who will be worth exhibiting, because everybody still remembers their names, and yet my younger readers never saw or only saw them at a distance.

I suppose it would be generally agreed that the greatest man of the period (I am speaking of the period round about 1960) was Lord Chief Justice Poltwhistle. He dated from the old days of the English Bar, before women could plead ("barbarous days, Lady Porstock") or sit on juries. In his young days, he said, it was still customary for lawyers to demand their fees, even when they lost the case; and he could quote instances in which men had risen to great fame at the Bar without ever winning a single important case. "We took it all in a more sporting spirit then," he would say, in his quaint old way. "You might win a moral victory as a pleader, although you failed to get a verdict owing to the intrinsic badness of your cause. But of course at that time counsel weren't required to take any oath as to what they thought of the rights and wrongs of the case, and it was not contrary to etiquette to defend a man although you were morally certain he was guilty. Even the moral theologians allowed that; and you must understand, Lady Porstock, that a moral theologian has a conscience just one point less elastic than a lawyer's. I recollect when the Act was passed in '42 an old company-promoter called Blofeld sitting next to O'Leary, who was a prominent K.C. in those days, and saying, 'Well, the next time I get into the Courts it seems as if I'd have to find either a knave or a fool to defend me.' 'And you'll have your pick of the Bar,'

says O'Leary. Wonderful smart chap he was, O'Leary. 'It isn't fair on us Catholics,' he'd say to me (there weren't very many of us practising in those days), 'for the Protestants all think we're such liars, when I've defended a man it's all I can do to prevent him getting up and pleading Guilty.' In those days, too, you could accept any brief you liked, and accepted the party that offered the biggest retaining fee, instead of having to wait your turn. It nearly broke O'Leary's heart when the Retaining Fees Bill went through. I remember Lord Hopedale saying to him, 'Surely you don't defend the old system? You wouldn't have a man get the best counsel because he can pay the biggest fee?' and he just looked up with a twinkle in his eye and said, 'I do defend it. Aren't those that want the best counsel the biggest rogues? And aren't the biggest rogues the rich people who can afford to pay for the best counsel?' Oh, he was a wonderful smart chap, O'Leary." And so the old gentleman would wander on, charming us with anecdotes of the bad old times that, just because they are so distant, still win our rebellious sympathies.

Another of our guests was Mrs. Justice Partridge, who was one of the first of my sex to take the silk, and actually the first, I believe, to attain the Bench. She used to tell the story of one of the first cases she had to try. The offence was criminal wife-beating, and everybody was expecting her, as a woman, to be particularly severe over it. The accused, an Irishman, was equal to the occasion, and explained that he was "just taychin' her her place in the house, the same as you would *your* old man, yer Honour."

Talking of Irishmen reminds me of another distinguished visitor of ours, Daniel Geraghty, the Prime Minister of Ireland at that time. I remember asking him why it was that Ireland, since her liberation in the twenties, had never done much that was memorable in the way of literature, having produced so much till then. "It's a simple thing," he said, "it's just that we Irishmen have no imagination. We're hard, business folk by nature. When you English had it all your own way, you always liked to believe, and always wanted us to believe, that we were just dreamy sort of fellows, only fit to dream in a pig-sty or a garret, the way we'd starve contented. It's always the way with you conquering races, you admire your subjects for the qualities that won't be dangerous to you. *Excudent alii*—it's the same all the world over." I have never made up my mind whether he was right, but it certainly looks as if he was justified.

At another time, we entertained Fothergill—the younger Fothergill, of course, not the one who wrote *Fifteen Years in a Fijian Larder*. He came to us when he had just had the distinction of discovering the last race that was left to be discovered—the Ibquo's in South America. He said they were a fascinating people, very simple in their character and very primitive in their habits. They knew nothing of flying, of electricity, or even of steam, and they used petrol only as an intoxicant. When they had to travel a long distance, or to pull heavy weights, they would take one of their tame mustangs and fasten it to a wheeled cart, and then drive it along with a whip, pulling the cart

behind it. Their cooking was done over a fire, usually of coal; and their sacrificial meals were always cooked in vessels of iron, not aluminium, because it would be "bad magic." They believed in a good Spirit which ruled the world, and in a bad Spirit which only had power to hurt them if they did wrong. They had great respect for old age, and generally chose some of the older men of the tribe to be their counsellors; if a child disobeyed its parents, it was punished. They also regarded their women with great veneration, and you would often see a man getting up from his place by the fire to make room for a woman who had none. When there was a marriage, the bride was solemnly escorted by her friends to the house of her future husband, where she was henceforward to live. The men worked in the fields; the women stayed at home and cooked for them, and also looked after the children, of whom there were often as many as eight or nine in one family. I seldom remember spending such an interesting evening.

It was not at my own house but at Lady Leek's that I used to meet the literary men of the period. I did not care for having them at Greylands, or even at Chiswick, because they were liable to wear such odd clothes, and to talk so very loud, and to bring the strangest people in with them, quite uninvited. But they were very interesting people to meet, there is no doubt. The trouble about their writings was that they spent almost all their time writing about one another; sometimes in appreciation, sometimes in criticism. Occasionally one of them would break away from the tradition by writing about the men of a previous

generation—there was Bernard Sykes, for example, who wrote a book that was very much talked about at the time, in which he tried to show that Lord Kitchener was a bad general, and that Herbert Wells was not really religious. But mostly they stuck to their own generation and criticized each other's works about each other. The novelists could not do this exactly, but even in the novels the heroes were always novelists and the heroines female novelists, and they all settled down in Chelsea and lived unhappily ever after. Novels were very long in those days, running to three, or four, or even five volumes. Archie Lock used to say that he always took Debrett with him when he went on a journey, because it was the only book you could still get in one volume. " And very creditable to them," he added, " considering the pressure on their space." Of course the old " adventure stories " had not quite died out, but they were dying out rapidly—the Tarzan Syndicate, for example, decided to confine itself to films about this time. Publishing was already so expensive that all books except technical ones had to be produced by subscription. So the only novels one had were very long and very literary. It was only Jenkins' invention in the seventies that made them cheap again.

I once met Henricourt and heard from him the story of his early struggles. He was a Civil Servant on £600 a year when he wrote his first masterpiece, *The Kleptomaniac*. It was one of the most realistic books of the century, and critics said that Chapter LXVII of the first volume, which begins with the hero falling into a deep, dreamless sleep, and ends just before he wakes up,

was one of the most powerful things ever written. He took it to a publisher, who said there was a printers' strike on, and they were not producing anything but school books at the moment; why didn't he film it? He said he had thought of that, but the manager had said it would want a reel about as long as the Equator, and asked him to cut it: he said that would be false to his Art. The publisher said he'd better store the manuscript somewhere and write another book that would catch on with the public—his reminiscences, for example—and then have the Klep. in reserve. He said it was the one thing they weren't allowed to do in the Civil Service, write Reminiscences, it was so apt to create a false impression. Couldn't the publisher see his way to producing the first volume, anyhow, dividing the risks? The publisher said it couldn't be done unless he could guarantee a sale of 4,000. In despair, he went to a Touting Agency, and asked them if they could find him 4,000 subscribers for what was really rather a remarkable novel. They asked if any important public characters came into the book under pseudonyms. He said no, that was against the principles of his Art. Finally the agent said he thought he could get the signatures if Henricourt wouldn't mind his pretending that the book was a translation from the Lithuanian, written by a blind Lithuanian patriot. Henricourt agreed to this, and so the subscribers were procured and the great work was produced after all.

Poetry in those days had hardly felt the influence of the neo-classical school, and our poets still went in for

using the language of common life, the commoner the better. To show the sort of thing that was popular, I don't think I can do better than give you a page from the Index of First Lines in a volume of collected Edwardian Poetry, which Lady Travers-Grant [1] gave me on my fiftieth birthday:

EDWARDIAN POETRY 1960–1965—INDEX

Damn all these lousy pamphleteers . . . . 87
Damn and blast, blast and damn . . . . 36
Damnation! has that flat-faced woman gone? . . 103
Damn Billy Smith, he's pinched my girl . . . 45
Damned if I care what these nincompoops say of me . 156
Damned if that stud hasn't come loose once more . 43
Damned if we'll sweat, you greasy sycophant . . 52
Damned in these mucky estuaries of hell . . . 113
Damn her! Where did she get those saffron eyes . 11
Damn him! . . . . . 73
Damn him! What the . . . . . 128
Damn it all, I've swabbed these beetle-squashers . 59
Damn kindness! damn faith! damn humanity! . 97
Damn my eyes, if yonder paling moonlight . . 77
Damn Nero for a mawkish hypocrite . . . 80
Damnonian maidens, in your sluttish smocks . . 34
Damn silly? Yet if this damned silliness . . 62
Damn the Church and damn the State . . . 39
Damn those little ears of yours, my darling . . 101
Damn you, Charles, you've spoilt it all . . . 1
Damp as the Morgue on autumn afternoons . . 100

I suppose the mechanical school of poets are hardly to be found at all in modern bookshelves, and yet there

[1] Previously Mrs. Tarporley, previously Mme de Brignard, previously Lady Stockdale, previously Lady Lushcombe, previously Mrs. Drake, previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

was a time when Edgar Pirbright was enthusiastically reviewed, and you would see his book, "By Helico to Helicon," lying on the tables of all his personal friends. He was obsessed with the idea that mechanical triumphs, being part of Man's self-assertion on the planet, are infinitely better subjects to be celebrated by the poet's typewriter than Nature, "that irrelevant mass of geological strata and atmospheric effects," as he called it. He even went so far as to bring out an anthology from the older poets, in which he included a great deal of Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold and other writers who had shown themselves hostile to the march of civilization; but he had, as he said, adapted them—which meant that he had altered them freely so as to suit his own doctrines. Some of it was ingenious, and even contained a good deal of original work: for instance, when you read the stanza:

> Our fathers watered with their tears
> The sea of time whereon we sail;
> They watered it for years and years,
> But found its tides of no avail;
> Still the same ocean round us raves,
> But we have utilized its waves!—

when you read a stanza like that, you did not realize all at once that it was the Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse which Pirbright was "utilizing" to celebrate the glories of the tide-trap. And there was a certain forcefulness about lines like:

> But still my heart with rapture fills,
> And dances with the cotton-mills:

but you felt the thing was going too far when you came across a poem called " Sky-writing," which opened :

My heart leaps up when I behold
An advert in the sky.

I used to have the book, but I have lost it ; it was full of things like that.

And then, of course, there was the Futurist school, which ran into all sorts of extremes ; but none more curious, I think, than the " Page-decorating " group of writers, who said that neither sense nor grammar nor even sound counted for anything in poetry ; an immediate, telling effect ought to be produced by the mere look of the letters on the page. I can give an example of it from an old album of mine : it is no use trying to make head or tail of it, but if you look at it with your eyes half-shut, so to speak, you can just see that the first verse contains pretty and the second contains ugly letters, or groups of letters :

St. Just-in-Roseland ! St. Just-in-Roseland !
All vervein, desirable vervein, and melilot.
Here veined agrimony swoons, with fumes calamitous, daintily ;
Arable fallows assoil sly fingers ;
Purple woofs incarnate of swishy meadows,
Dilapidated obloquies amorously urgent, all anyhow, wayward fingers,
Transience unimaginably rapid,
Languorous ditties, that opiates inhibit,
Rosy anodynes, albeit rigorously voluble,
Alcantara !

Kircudbright !
Gutted offsets, bombastic in groping hot-houses, endways :
Fungoid sprockets, puddle-bedripped, ungainly,

Rectitudes, angularly awkward, perspectives,
Elucubrate dross, grinning potsherds, warps,
Stinking of frogs, knock-kneed scorpion gargoyles,
Wreathed mouthings of something quarrelsome, brutish,
Newts hag-ridden, huddled responsibilities,
Spawn umbellated, coughing, slobbering,
Heckmondwike !

Perhaps it was time the neo-classical school came along to give us a new lead ! But of course it was far more of a revolution in Art than it was in letters. I am afraid I am a very poor first-hand witness about the artistic movements of my time, for the old painters used to expect such a lot of you ! They exhibited, of course, at the Academy and other accessible places every now and then, but even so it was rather trying to have the artists standing on guard, as they always did, and explaining to the sight-seer, not what their pictures were about, but what sort of emotions they ought to evoke ! Some of them went further, and said you must not look at their pictures unless you were fasting, or unless you had recently taken opium. (Opium-smoking was not as common then as it is now, but already you were sometimes offered it in Chelsea.) I was too busy in one way and another to devote my life to picture-inspecting ; and indeed, it was only a small group of people who took any interest in painting at all.

But I did once come in close touch with it, when I sat for my own portrait to Sanderson, the great Præteritist. In those days, when chromography gave very little help to the artist, you would often have to " sit " twice or three times before the painter caught what he con-

sidered a likeness. It was during the enforced idleness of one of these " sittings " that I had a long conversation with him which interested me so much that I wrote down notes of it afterwards.

We talked of Futurism ; he said it was all very well, but the trouble about it was it had no future. He told me (what I did not know) that the term " futurism," when it was first invented, in the early part of the century (" before you were born, my dear "—waving his brush at me), meant simply a dissatisfaction with present standards in art and a determination to find new methods : it was only with Lennox and Burstall that it took on its new meaning. The old Futurists refused, indeed, to draw the thing as they saw it, but they had not reached the idea of portraying things *as one day they would be.* It was Lennox's *Ruins of Westminster Cathedral* that first heralded this much-criticized departure ; and it was Burstall who developed the notion in portrait-painting. He was something of a missionary : unhappily married himself, he maintained that it was one of the functions of Art to show the evanescence of beauty, and when *débutantes* came to sit to him he represented them as those wrinkled old women whom we still see and admire (he was speaking, of course, in 1960) in his portraits. He was a missionary, and something of a martyr ; in consequence of his decision, he had to struggle for a long time with neglect and poverty ; and it was only his portrait of Prince Albert, then three years old, as six foot high and a Colonel of Hussars, that drew attention to him once more. He got all the babies after that.

I said I supposed the Futuribilists were a necessary, or at least a logical, sequel to the Futurists. He said no, except in so far as they continued the tradition of drawing anything rather than what you saw in front of you; "and that, after all," he added, "we Præteritists maintain as strongly as anybody." The idea of painting what might have been was a quite different inspiration from the idea of painting what probably would be. (The names, he said, were all wrong; the Futurists ought to have been called Futuribilists, and the Futuribilists Potentialists, or something of that sort.) Besides, Futuribilism started in Belgium, and came out of the Electricist school, which we in England had barely heard of; had I ever seen an Electric picture, such as Bavet's *Windmill*? I said no. "Well," he said, "it represents simply a mass of electrons butting in and out. It was a craze that caught on for a bit, but there was a sameness about it. Then there were the Vitalists, but they never mattered much; and then Mosheim and his crowd began the Potentialist movement. It was still life, chiefly, game and so on; and the idea was to represent it not as what it was, but as what it might have become . . . well, they weren't very pleasant pictures, and our modern taste has decided, perhaps rightly, against them. It hardly started in England till Murchison's *Decay of a Leaf* was exhibited: and even then it didn't catch on until they began to treat human subjects, like Moffatt with his *Influenza Patient*, and Rosenstein with his *Triumph of the Red Corpuscles*."

Here he had to get up and readjust the convex

lenses, so our conversation was interrupted. When he was back at the easel I asked him why he said Futurism had no future. He said because it lived by innovation ; it did not develop gradually, like the mind or the tastes of a man as he grows up, but found its successive inspirations in continual revolt from the latest fashion : " it's a series of kicks," he said, " like the old petrol tanks." That meant that the public simply didn't care about pictures, because they—the laymen—hadn't leisure to follow all the latest movements in art criticism. In the old days you took years to learn how to paint a picture, and only a fortnight to learn how to criticize one ; now it was the other way about. Only artists looked at pictures, and they chiefly to see how they could invent a new method, and turn the old ones on to the scrap-heap. " They didn't always succeed," he explained. " You'd be too young to remember the commotion there was in the early thirties, when nobody would talk about anything but relativity, and Manning Barker suddenly laid it down that there could be no such thing as Truth, even in Art, without velocity. His school would only paint for the screen, and you had to sit for a quarter of an hour to see the portrait of a Cabinet minister. I remember Lady Marrett, who was a beauty in those days, being released in nearly a quarter of a mile of film, and you never saw more than a square inch of her at any given moment. It was hard for the sculptors, you see : they wanted Billing to do an avenue of statues up the old Hammersmith Broadway, but the police wouldn't allow it on account of the cars having to go forty miles an hour to get the values properly. Some of

the movements fail, and some stick, but it can't go on like this."

"But what about you?" I asked. "Aren't you one of the revolts?" I am afraid my question was a tactless one, because he painted for a time in complete silence, and then said, yes, he was only one of the reactions; he was only a fashion: one day people would see no more in him than they saw in Whistler or Pennell. ("Not that I should be surprised if some of those fellows came into vogue again," he put in. "I was at a smart house the other day where my hostess, who is rather a crank, was thinking of having her house decorated with pictures, as they used to in our young days.") But he painted in his way because he believed in it. "Every line on your face," he said, "and every play of movement on your face, was predetermined for it by your smiles and frowns and pouts and fidgetings when you were a baby in arms. I must track Truth to its source, so I see you as a baby still—you must excuse me saying that, but it's my creed. It will last my time; but you're young, and you may live to see a reaction. These neo-classical people are attracting a lot of attention: I'm an old fogey, and I can't see anything in these new ideas, but I daresay your daughters will." It was a bold prophecy for a man to make in the early sixties; but he was quite right. What would he have said to our neo-romantics!

Talking of Futurism, I noticed in the paper the other day that Dame Beatrice Goodge was criticizing the old Futurists on the ground that they never produced any architecture: she would not be old enough to remember

it, but I have actually seen a row of Cubist houses! It was when I was house-hunting, with Juliet Savage, in '41, and we were trying our luck at the "Garden City" at Welwyn. The architect's idea was a very simple one, which was to build a series of octagonal passages, just like a honeycomb: after all, bees built like that, and bees ought to know. Juliet said if I were shaped like a bee and spent all my time in the City making honey, one of these would just suit me. Only a very few tenants were ever secured, and these did not last long: profane neighbours, I believe, used to call them the Hivites. What a mad world it is, and how few men and women you will find who have not a blind spot somewhere.

"Men and women"—we still write the words in that order, though the Feminists, at the period of which I am typing, did their best to get it inverted. I cannot say that I sympathized at all with this agitation; I have always been old-fashioned, and felt that the proper sphere of woman is the flat. But I used to see a good deal in those days of Esther Margate, who was one of our most fanatical Feminists; and I think she ought to have her mention in this chapter, because there was a sort of mad consistency about her, which I believe to be a necessary element in all greatness of the reforming kind. She would always say, for example, "I do not suppose there is a woman, man or child in this country . . . etc.," because she maintained that woman was intellectually and morally man's superior, and ought therefore to have the place of honour. I can still remember her asking Lord Billericay at dinner whether

he didn't think the women and men of London were better dressed now than they used to be: he said he was a bad judge, because he only came up to London once a year, for the Harrow and Eton match (he meant the cricket match, of course), and as a rule only stayed there till the Cambridge and Oxford match. Nobody ever quite knew whether Esther Margate realized what he was getting at. She used to dilate, too, on the unfairness of talking about "Man," when you meant the human race in general: Archie Lock asked her if we ought to say "The proper study of mankind is Woman"; she answered quite sharply, no, "womankind," of course. I believe some of her disciples went so far as to change their names; and you certainly do meet people called Goodwoman and Newwoman now, which you never used to. But her attempt to confine the suffrage to women was foredoomed to failure, even if Juliet Savage had not organized her campaign against it. It was conclusively shown that at least 27 per cent. of the men who had votes regularly exercised their right.

This seems to be a very rambling sort of chapter, but who has a right to ramble if it be not an old lady who has seen more than seventy summers? I must not finish this chapter without giving a place in it to George Hammond the historian. I never knew, I think, a more delightful conversationalist. He was often at Greylands, and I was always trying to draw him out, having that worst habit of hostesses, the habit of making a man talk on his own subject. Once, for example, I asked him what he thought was the really

salient characteristic of the early twentieth century (his special period) which distinguished the people of that time from ourselves. " I have often wondered," he said, " but I think you get nearest to the truth by saying that they had no sense of humour—that is, they had not got what we mean by the sense of humour. I've been at the British Museum a good deal lately (that it, at the Cippenham annexe), looking through the old newspapers of that period, the cheap newspapers especially, and I think it's quite impossible to suppose that the people who liked to have that kind of thing served up with their breakfasts had any sense of humour at all. If you took one of our grandfathers and put him down opposite a series of drawings like, say, McGillivray's, I don't think he'd see anything in them. Or take that joke in *Punch* last week—did you see last week's *Punch* ? Well, there are two men travelling by railway, and one looks out of the window and says, ' Cholsey and Moulsford, change for Wallingford.' And the other man says, ' I should jolly well think you did.' Clever, isn't it ? But, you know, I don't believe they'd have seen anything funny in it in the twenties."

There, I had forgotten the humorists ! Lancelot Briggs-Wilde, what a creator of merriment ! And then there was the old Bishop of Birkenhead, who had the reputation of being quite unrivalled as a *raconteur*. It was he, I remember, who described to us how once at a missionary festival he had a very shy curate staying with him ; and at breakfast, it seems, the eggs were not all that they should have been. The curate had one

that was really very far gone, and the Bishop, by way of apology, said, " I'm afraid, Mr. So-and-so, your egg's not very good." " Oh, not at all," was the mild reply, " *it's excellent in parts.*" We all told the Bishop that he ought to send that up to *Punch*, but I don't know if he ever did.

We did not, I am afraid, see a great deal of the Anglican episcopate, but of course Cardinal Smith was our near neighbour at Hare Street. He was a great walker : and when he came over to luncheon he would nearly always come on foot, although the distance was nearly three miles, and he had an excellent helico. " I don't like going the pace in this part of Hertfordshire, Lady Porstock," he once told me. " You see, I was brought up in these parts—twelve years of my life—and somehow I've got the leisurely spirit of them into my bones. When I die, I want them to bury me under the station platform at St. Margaret's, so that I can wait for the Day of Judgment there ; it's easier waiting when you're accustomed to it."

## CHAPTER XIV

## AN OLD WAY OF MAKING A NEW DEPARTURE

> Nor blame the Rock, whose slippery edge was splashed
> Only by waves your frantic struggling washed.
>
> E. P. Mason.

MY political career did not survive my husband's death. The Holroyd ministry, it will be remembered, went out in '63, and the sense of loneliness and depression I then felt did not allow me to stand again. Since, however, a certain misunderstanding has arisen about this, and it is necessary for me to clear, not only my own character, but the august memory of James Holroyd, I may be pardoned for printing here the letter which I received from him on its being made known that I did not intend to seek re-election :

Aix-les-Bains, *Oct.* 12.

Dear Lady Porstock,—

*I cannot tell you how sorry I am to hear that we are to lose your help at the forthcoming election. It is just the moment when splendid talents such as yours would be most useful to us. But I must not, of course, ask you to reconsider your decision. My own regret is shared, I need hardly tell you, in the fullest sense by my colleagues. I had a wireless only yesterday from Lord Brede to say,*

*" Please express deep regret Lady Porstock very natural decision she has taken none more sorry than self to see ranks of old comrades in arms depleted tout lasse tout casse tout passe ac.ac.ac. Brede." You will be glad to hear that Sir Hugh ffynes has consented to fill the Manchester N.W.* (3) *coupon, so that Liberalism in that constituency will not be without its worthy representative.*

*Yours sincerely,*

JAMES HOLROYD

About this time Francis and Gervase, who had both done very well at Eton, got leaving scholarships into the Guards. It was not so much the financial side of this that appealed to me (the scholarships had the effect of reducing the premium to £500) as the consciousness that my boys were well thought of by their masters and were worthy grandsons of Herbert Blisworth. And now what was left for me but to retire into the background ? And what is left for me, you will ask, but to retire into the background, and bring these inconsequent memoirs to a conclusion ? Well, I confess that I have finished with public affairs ; and if any of my readers goes beyond this point, he must do it on the clear understanding that he has let himself be betrayed into taking an interest in the private affairs of a talkative old woman who was not, after all, much of a personage even in her day. Her private affairs, nay, her very private affairs, for what is so personal to each of us as his or her attitude towards religion ? And that is all I have left to speak of. It is what we older folk begin to worry about when the interests of youth desert us

and the friends of youth are taken from our side, and we find ourselves no longer battling with the winds of circumstance, but volplaning steadily towards the drome that waits for all of us at the last.

I know I have figured in these pages as a careless sort of butterfly, untroubled by any thought of my last end. Perhaps my readers will be disappointed in me at finding such a reversal of my old ways of thought. But, be that as it may, old age and bereavement and the lack of absorbing occupations combined to drive me in upon myself, and make me think about my last landing. It was natural that in this position I should turn for guidance to one who from quite an early age had manifested an interest in my spiritual affairs, who, indeed, had laughingly described himself as my " father professor," Canon Dives. Canon Dives I have written, for so I shall always remember him, but indeed by this time he had attained that preferment for which his exceptional qualities had long marked him out, as Episcopal Bishop of Norwich.[1] So long as the Established Church remained a single body (only weakened by the secession of the Feminists in '46, and the Enthusiasts in '53), the Westernizing party had still sufficient weight to hinder the advancement of one who had always been so outspoken a champion of " relativist " views. But, as those of my readers who are interested in such subjects will remember, in 1964, only five years after Disestablishment became an accomplished fact, the ecclesiastical map was yet further

[1] The title distinguishes him from the Ecumenical Bishop of Norwich, Dr. Bridler.

complicated by a schism within the old Church of England. The Westernizers succeeded in securing for themselves that recognition by the Orthodox Churches of the East which remained theirs till, on the outbreak of the Great War, they were solemnly anathematized and cut off from Communion. But they secured this advantage at the price of separating themselves from the whole relativist party, which contained within itself so much that was most striking in the intellect of contemporary Christianity. At West Mill, our parish church had remained Anglican (it was only in the towns that the old churches were divided up among the various denominations), and at the schism Mr. Rowlands, after much hesitation, pronounced in favour of the relativists—it would have cost him a divorce to do otherwise—so that, at least for his lifetime, the position of the parish was defined. I was not very much influenced by this fact; but old friendship and the outstanding personality of the new Bishop of Norwich made me, as I say, turn to him.

I wrote, then, to Bishop Dives asking him for an exposition of the Christian religion suited to the beginner—to one who had been accustomed to regard the supernatural as not real, or, if real, not vital. He was kind enough to send me by return a record taken from one of his own recent sermons, preached at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. It was part of a course, but he said it was exactly the thing for one in my state of mind. I mean to print the relevant part of it here.

"Everything is relative to a thinker. That is clear from the mere force of words; for what is a thing but a

thought? When I think a thing I at the same time thing it: I give it thingness by thinking it. Now, that all thought is relative to a thinker has long been clear so far as the process of thought, what we call nowadays the thinkage, is concerned. It is the boast of modern philosophy, trained, and proud to have been trained, in the school of relativist Science, that it has gone further than this. It assures us (I trust I make my meaning clear) that it is not only our thinkage but our thoughtage that is relative to a thinker. If I think that two and two are four—allowing, for the sake of argument, that this is so, though I know well that there are serious difficulties about believing it to be so—if I think that two and two are four, then the fourness, if I may so express myself, of the two and the two combined is part of my thoughtage, and relative to me as a thinker.

"But not, let us hasten to add, of my thoughtage only. It is part of the race-thoughtage, the thoughtage which rises like an upgushing stream from the harmonious and simultaneous thinkage of the human species. I think we may go further, and say that it upgushes equally from the thinkage of all other spiritual beings, if there are any other spiritual beings in existence, and in so far as they exist. Now, when a thing is merely the thoughtage of my thinkage, what does that prove? Why, nothing or next to nothing; merely that it is thinkable. But when it is the thoughtage not only of my thinkage but of the world-thinkage, then we go further; then we are not content to say, This is thinkable; we must needs add, This is think-

worthy. More than that we do not know, and we shall never know. The old confidence that objects exist, outside of and apart from our thinkage, is gone. The old confidence that things are true, outside of and apart from our thinkage, is gone. That confidence, valuable as it has been in the training of our race, and powerfully as it has contributed to the development of our history, is no longer ours. It made the fatal mistake of distinguishing and abstracting our thought-age from our thinkage. To repeat that mistake to-day would be to argue as if Mosenheim and Poschling had never existed—I mean, in so far as they ever did exist.

" Well, when first we realize that there is no such thing, properly speaking, as existence, and no such thing as truth, we feel, for a time, unmanned. We are like aviators plane-wrecked on some little island far from all help, with nothing around us but sea and air. And we naturally ask ourselves, do we not, what have we saved from the wreck ? If we are no longer allowed to say, ' This exists,' or ' This is true '—or, at any rate, not allowed to say it without a great deal of qualification, a very great deal of qualification—what can we say ? Oh, it is all right, my dear sisters and brothers, we have just one little plank saved to us from the wreck. And what is that plank ? Why, we can still say, ' This is thinkworthy.' Oh, beautiful word, thinkworthiness ! And beautiful thing, thought-worthiness, I mean think—thoughtthinkiness, no, I don't mean that (here the record is somewhat blurred, and it would appear as if Bishop Dives must have blown his nose). Oh, beautiful thing, thinkworthiness !

If indeed thinkworthiness can be called a thing, and in so far as it is right to do so.

" It is thinkworthy, my dear sisters and brothers, that two and two make, or rather, in a phrase of less apparent grammar but more spiritual meaning, makes, four. It is thinkworthy that any two sides of a triangle are greater than the third. It is thinkworthy that thinks which are equal to the same think—I mean, things which are equal to the same thing, are equal to one another.

" Now, it is plain that all this is going to have a great influence, a very great influence indeed, upon the religious conceptions of our day. We used to say, for example, ' The soul exists after death.' We can no longer say that ; we have to reduce our thought, that is our thinkage, to simpler elements. We have to say, ' It is thinkworthy that if that thing which we call the soul is thinkworthy at all, then that thinkworthiness is still thinkworthy after death.' Try it over a few times, and you will find it quite easy. And do not suppose that because such a formula as that has a less absolute and a less defiant ring about it than our old formula, ' The soul exists after death,' therefore we have lost something, and are poorer than our forefathers. No, oh no, quite the contrary. For we know now, what they did not know, that thingness and thinkworthiness are one. It cannot be too often repeated ; in thinking a thing we thing it : our thinkage —wonderful thought ! I mean, wonderful thoughtage ! —thinks thingness into the thing ! It cannot be too often repeated, the man who thinks things things things !

" And another great advantage arises, once we have mastered this salutary doctrine. The old religious formulas were always trying to make our thoughts correspond with realities conceived as real, truths conceived as true, outside of and apart from ourselves. They were always saying, I believe in this, I believe in that—oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! A generation or so back, there was a slang phrase which was used to express incredulity; when you meant, ' That is not true,' you said, ' I don't think ! ' My dear sisters and brothers, there was a vast deal of profound philosophy in that simple piece of slang! Mosenheim himself would not have had them express themselves otherwise. If there is no such thing as truth, and you may take it from me that there is not, except in a very special sense which it would take too long to explain to you now—if there is no such thing as truth, then we are not going to burn one another for denying that this or that is true. We are going to abandon Truth, and go forward boldly, none knows whither.

" What, then, is religion ? The best definition that has been given of it is, I suppose, Poschling's : ' Religion is that realization of the Ego under the stimulus, real or apparent, of the Non-ego, which finds its hyper-egoization in de-egoization and its de-egoization in hyper-egoization.' Let it stand at that. We will now return to the short-sighted policy of Baasha "—the rest of Bishop Dives' sermon did not bear upon my immediate difficulties."

I confess I was somewhat troubled by the tone of

Bishop Dives' utterance. It seemed to me to show all his old grasp of philosophical subtleties, but less than his old confidence in the claims of the supernatural. Could it be, I asked myself, that my oracle had himself changed with the change of the years, and gave forth now a different note? I was so troubled by this thought that I wrote again, asking him quite frankly to tell me if he thought his views were the same as when I knew him at Oxford, or different; and, if different, whether they had now reached a standstill, or whether they were still developing, and if so in what direction? His answer was a candid avowal:

DEAR LADY PORSTOCK—

*You have, with your usual directness and acumen, touched upon a point over which I have often questioned myself. Looking back over the years, it seems clear to me that my religious opinions have modified with time, and that, like the Greek poet long ago, "I grow old learning many things." But, let it be observed, in these successive modifications of my point of view I am only following the example of what you and I recognize as being the Holy Catholic Church, which has learnt much, and, I think we may say, learned to forget much, since those early days when it seemed to dominate the world in the positiveness and self-assuredness of its youth.*

*Now, picture to yourself some acrobat who finds it necessary, in the exercise of his profession, to walk every day, before an audience of neck-craning yokels, from one point to another over a tight-rope. He finds it easier to accomplish this (owing to a simple but interesting law of*

*physics*) *if he carries with him a heavy pole that assures his balance. By degrees he finds that his skill is becoming greater; habit has made his task light to him. What does he do? He has six inches chopped off either end of his pole, so that his performance becomes at once more hazardous and more remarkable. Six months later, he finds that he can afford to shorten it once more. And so on, my dear Lady Porstock, and so on, until the pole in his hand is but a short stump, hardly more significant than the staff with which Babylonian fancy pictured Jacob as having crossed over Jordan.*

*Is not that, if we will look into the facts closely, the position of the Church? It sets before itself one paramount object, the achievement of the Christian ideal; you and I will not quarrel, I think, as to what we mean by that. It is a difficult and a delicate task that it has set before itself; and it may well face the prospect with not much less misgiving than the acrobat who sees stretching before him the gossamer causeway of the tight-rope. And it starts out with a burden of dogmas and beliefs which encumbers it, and yet in encumbering it steadies its progress. And then, just as the acrobat, growing more steady on his narrow bridge of rope, finds himself capable of walking with less and less of pole to balance him, so the Church finds that with less and less of dogma, less and less of belief, it can walk along the narrow path prescribed for it to tread. Until the Reformation, it was able to steady itself by means of three things, tradition, the Bible, and human reason; the Reformation was the moment at which it decided that it could steady itself without tradition. In the nineteenth century, faced with the*

*important claims of the evolutionary doctrine, it found that it could make a further advance still, and it cast aside the Bible as it had cast aside tradition, content to steady itself by human reason alone. It has been left to us in this century to learn that the human reason itself is an untrustworthy thing, on which it is fatal to repose any reliance; we are now learning, consequently, to dispense with the human reason equally.*

*What, then, is the end of this process, or has it an end at all? For myself, I am content to believe that it has not. From century to century, it seems to me, we learn to get on with less and less of belief in supernatural things to encourage or to justify us, and I see no limit to that development. I go further, and say that I do not wish to see any limit to that development. The less we believe, clearly, the more creditable it is in us to call ourselves Christians still. Our object, therefore, at all times must be to reduce belief to its irreducible minimum; we must believe as little as we can, and be constantly on the look-out for some method by which we may be enabled to believe even less. It is not easy, this search of ours; like hill-climbers, we are bounded by our own horizon, and cannot yet see the full possibilities of disbelief that lie ahead of us. And just as, surely, we do not blame Luther because, with his limited perspective, he failed to disbelieve in the Bible; just as we do not blame Kant because he could not see how to disbelieve in the human reason; so, let us hope, our descendants will not be too hard on us because here and there we were guilty, through mere shortsightedness, of setting limits to our incredulity.*

*And thus we come down to the very interesting question,*

*Is there a vanishing-point? Will there come a time when we are able to call ourselves Christians without believing anything at all? For myself, I confess that I do not think so. It seems to me that it is an integral part of our Christian probation, this perpetual struggle to disbelieve; that, consequently, the residuum of belief must be conceived, not as a difference which will sooner or later disappear as the result of successive subtractions, but as a quotient with an infinite divisibility. To the last end of time, it seems to me, we shall be able to continue offering up the old prayer, that we may be helped in our unbelief.*

*There, dear Lady Porstock, you have my view of the case. I only hope that these stumbling words of mine may help you to know your own mind.*

*Yours quite sincerely,*

AMPHIBOLUS NORVIC

I had just finished reading this remarkable letter, and was engaged in considering whether it was exactly what I wanted or exactly what I did not want, when the teletypewriter that connected with the front door rang at my elbow, and told me that Cardinal Smith had called. It was not much past five, but I knew his old-fashioned habits, so I whistled for tea and went down to show him up. When I saw him I had a curious experience. There is a certain smile one only sees (I think) on the faces of Catholic ecclesiastics, a smile which their friends call sanctified and their enemies cunning. To me it had always seemed to say, " I can afford to wait," and it had always irritated me rather, as if its cocksureness indicated that sooner or later he

was bound to make a proselyte of me. To-day it still seemed to say, " I can afford to wait," only I found myself attaching a different significance to it. Well, he came up, and we had a long talk. I do not propose to describe it ; after all, this is not a religious autobiography. But soon afterwards, when I was at my Chiswick house, I began to go to the Oratory for instruction.

This is all twenty years ago now, but I do not feel that I need give any description of the Oratory and its ways, for whoever goes there now will find it almost exactly the same as it was then—and has been, I suppose, from a very much earlier time. I could not, of course, penetrate beyond the enclosure : no one of my sex, I was told, had ever done so except once when " Buffalo Bill's " Indians came to tea—there were still Red Indians in existence down to my own day, and some of these used to be shown off as a circus turn in England, most of them Catholics. At the last moment it was discovered that the good Fathers could not distinguish braves from squaws, and some of the latter had already been admitted into the garden by mistake ! " But that was before my time," said the old priest who had instructed me. The long brown house, with its old-fashioned carriage-sweep, watching unwinking the ceaseless grinding flow of the Brompton Road platform ; the stone façade of the church, thrust out like a rock for the daily tide to eddy round, half trapped, half free ; the Fathers themselves, still, for all their man-of-the-modern-worldliness, dressed in the very manner of St. Philip, and taking their supper at a

quarter to seven after the manner of Father Faber ; the interior of the church, housing indeed Saints whom Father Faber had never heard of, yet still the same in its outlines—the same red hangings, the same cope on the Lady statue, spoils of some old South American emperor, the same Corpo Santo, grimed now with London dust till it might have passed for St. Philip himself—all spoke to me of a changelessness which was not dullness, a peacefulness which was not stagnation. Oh yes, I know there are plenty of Congregations which have their roots deeper in the history of the Church, their place in the story of England yet longer and yet more honourable : but it is the Oratory, with the life of the sixteenth century thrown on to the screen of the nineteenth century, and there fixed as if for all time, that stood and stands to me for type of the eternal tradition.

Am I confusing the merely interminable with the eternal ? No, it was at High Mass at the Oratory that I realized what eternity meant. The frivolous might find them simply interminable, those long Mozart masses that the Protestants go to hear. But if you are in the right spirit to catch the message of the place, then you find eternity. The three ministers, dwarfed by the height of the building, seem like ants crawling about in the presence of Something immeasurably greater than themselves : the Kyrie and the *Miserere nobis* of the Gloria sound like what they are, tributes of abject servility to a King whose audience no unclean thing may approach ; the spaciousness of the whole setting, music, and building, and cere-

monies, stands for a poor sacrament of that Infinitude towards which all this self-annihilating homage is directed: you see the work of man's hands as the little doll's house it is. In one breathless moment of the Credo the heart seems to stop still, and all becomes an eternal moment, that silence which is kept before the throne of God.

I do not know why I should have said all this, or centred it all about the Oratory, if it be not that Miss Linthorpe's warning was right, and there comes a time when you grow old, and drop out of your generation, and the mind, satiated with the ceaseless pageant of the interminable, craves for some outward expression of the eternal. Anyhow, my conversion was neither a hysterical nor a sensational one. I kept very quiet about it beforehand—why, I do not know, unless it be from some vague, inherited instinct. It is true that at the time of which I type it is doubtful whether one-fifth of the population of England was Catholic, and that the act of being received into the Church was not quite the everyday thing it is to us. But already things were very different from my young days, when the Catholic Church was still regarded as something desperate and melodramatic, a conspiracy against the public peace. I remember, for example, when I was about ten years old how the news reached us that a family friend had made his submission, and Lady Trecastle, who was staying with us, talked about it in a hushed, shocked voice as if it were a thing one could hardly mention in front of children, although Lady Trecastle herself had no religious beliefs and never

went near a church if she could help it. The day of all that was long over, yet somehow I felt shy and awkward about my religious intentions, and mentioned them to nobody—concealed them, I am afraid, rather deliberately, from Juliet Savage, whose keen criticism I confess that I dreaded.

Actually it was in coming away from the ceremony of my reception that I met her in the street. " Come and have luncheon somewhere," she said, " I've got something to tell you." When we were comfortably ensconced at *Les Rossignols*, she turned to me and said, " Opal, my dear, I've just become a Catholic." I said in a stupefied way, " So have I." Then we giggled idiotically for a little ; and cross-questioning proved that she also had written to Bishop Dives, and had been sent identically the same sermon-record ! She then ordered a rather good Volnay, and when it appeared, leaning over coquettishly in its basket, she said, " Let us hope that this is drinkable, if not actually drinkworthy. Personally, I've got a droughtage on me which will demand a good deal of drinkage."

## CHAPTER XV

## ENGLAND ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR

> Our fathers, a degenerate race,
> Begot us scoundrels, to give place
> To something meaner yet unborn.
>
> HORACE, tr. STAPLETON.

I SUPPOSE it is inevitable that those of us who have lived through a great world-crisis, such as the late war, should ask themselves or should be asked by others what it was like just before the crisis happened? How postured did the time of reckoning find us? Were we playing on, all unconscious, at the brink of a volcano? Or were we prepared—materially, morally, spiritually prepared—for what was to come upon us? The question is obviously not an easy one to answer. It is not easy to wipe out, even in imagination, the impressions left by nearly three years of war atmosphere and war strain. But, if only because there are not many of us left whose birth dates right back to the Five Years' War, the last occasion when Europe became an armed camp, I feel that I ought to try and give my answer to that question, before I close these memoirs and bow myself out, to make way for younger authors with other messages.

I do not intend, however, to say anything much

about our merely material preparation for the war. It is, after all, a question for experts: and the event proved that all the combatant countries were far better prepared for hostilities than the general public had ever supposed they would be. It is a commonplace that in any war either the offensive or the defensive arm is the better equipped, in advance of its rival. In this case, there can be no doubt at all that our defensive had outrun our offensive preparations. This was not generally known; indeed in our own country and in many others the comparatively small results achieved by our striking force became the subject of severe and quite undeserved criticism. The truth is, that Science does not lightly forget her humanitarian purpose; and (it is important to remember) the amazing efficiency of the Secret Service work done in the interests of the various belligerents in the long period between 1919 and 1972 had made it easy for the authorities in each country to know what was in store for them and to prepare against it. For the heroic and self-sacrificing work done by that noble body of men, the Secret Service Agents (mostly of Japanese origin, I believe), Europe and humanity itself can never be too grateful.

What was the effect of it? Why, that Mars, as in the old Greek legend, found himself in fetters. We, like the enemy, had put our faith in the invincible quality of our heavy artillery, not realizing that they, like us, had prepared a system of mine defences for their troops which made heavy artillery a back number. We told ourselves that our aerial fleet, superior both

in numbers and in efficiency to any Continental fleet, was bound to make life insupportable in the larger enemy towns: the calculations of our enemy were exactly similar. Neither of us could foresee that long deadlock which resulted from the "stranglehold" we exercised over the enemy's dispositions; neither of us could foresee that both sides would come out of the war with their air fleet practically untouched. Again, the typhus-germs from which we expected so much proved utterly ineffective against nations which had inoculated their children against typhus from infancy: and similarly, their dastardly plan (contrary to all the rules of civilized warfare) of infecting London with bubonic plague came too late when Milling's discovery had made the bubonic plague a matter of three days in bed. In fact, if it had not been for the hitherto unrealized strength of British propaganda, it is difficult to see how the war could have resulted in anything but a complete stalemate.

But the question, Were we prepared for the war? involves deeper and more spiritual issues than this. What manner of men were we when that sudden strain was put upon our moral fibre? That is what posterity will want to know. And first of all, let me say that it is of England, not of the other belligerents, that I intend to speak. After all, on the admission of her enemies and even of her allies, it was she who bore the brunt of the conflict. Going into it with less, I suppose, of religious inspiration than France, with a Government less efficient, because less autocratic, than that of the

United States, and with material resources not capable of competing with those of Brazil, she has achieved such a measure of victory as is indicated by the fact that her war indemnity, if it is ever paid, will amount to little less than a tenth of her war debt. It is not, then, simply because England is my own country, and because, a stay-at-home by nature, I have little inside information about other peoples, but because it was upon Great Britain that, in those fateful three years, the eyes of the world were centred, that I confine myself in this chapter to a survey of English conditions and English ideals.

"Show me," that great philanthropist Peterson used to say, "how the poor of a nation live, and I will tell you whether that nation is alive." In this respect, it must be confessed, the record of England at that time was indeed a black one. Huddled together in slums and rookeries, whose "model" flats often had to contain two families where only one could live with comfort, the poor were stifled from the first by overcrowding. It must be remembered that the poorer classes had, as usual, larger families than the rich, and it was no uncommon thing to find four or five children living in the same tenement with their parents. Many of these poor little mites got no more than a fortnight's holiday at the seaside every year, and had nowhere to play in except the public parks. In return for their school attendance they were paid a mere pittance, and only the simplest possible fare was provided for them by the school authorities. It was piteous, as one moved about the poorer parts of London, to see their

untidy hair, their crumpled collars and dirty handkerchiefs. Small wonder that disease spread quickly in such surroundings, and it was estimated that child-mortality in the poorer quarters of the large towns was fully one in a thousand. For a time, of course, the influence of the school kept them out of harm's way, but at seventeen or eighteen, just at the most impressionable period of life, their schooling must perforce come to an end, and, hardly more than boys, they were thrust out into the world to shift for themselves. Often, of course, drink or gambling would be responsible for the worst cases of poverty ; but often, too, it would be mere ill-luck or imprudent under-insurance that left them stranded when they were out of work. Too proud to accept relief from any of the thirty-eight organizations that offered it, these unfortunates would drag out a wretched existence on such doles as their Union and the National Beneficent Fund could afford them. It is true, and fortunately true, that we have now done much to remedy this terrible state of things ; but in 1972 it was no exaggeration to say that the conditions of life in our great cities stood up in witness against us.

As usual, overcrowding in the towns went hand in hand with, and was partly caused by, rural depopulation. In all the country districts it was the same story —you could not get the young people to remain on the land. It was difficult to blame them ; wages were so low that an unskilled agricultural labourer was hardly paid on the same scale as a governess ; the cottages for the most part were mere eight-roomed

hovels, and the deafening noise and incessant whirr of the machinery made the farmyard a good imitation of the Inferno. Machinery was continually replacing human labour, almost faster than the diminution in the birth-rate could keep pace with the process. Besides, there were few amusements which could make the country towns and villages compare in amenity with the large manufacturing centres: the cinemas often had no afternoon performances, and such dances as there were seldom lasted later than midnight. It was no wonder that the lure of the great cities continued to exercise its spell over the young and the ambitious.

The effect of these bad conditions on the health of the nation was plainly shown during the war itself, when the various "classes" came up for medical examination. Of the total manhood of Great Britain, one-tenth were liable to vertigo, such as prevented them either from going up in aircraft or else from going down into the pits. Something like 13 per cent. suffered from Pollock's inhibition, either in the form of actonism (reluctance to kill) or of athanism (reluctance to die). Eight per cent. were declared unfit through psophophobia, which made them unable to stand loud noises. Another six per cent. had taxiphobia, and could not serve in the ranks. Ochlophobia, capnophobia, pyrophobia, zophophobia, atenxipodia, and other more ordinary nervous diseases, such as Blast's inhibition, swelled the total of non-combatants. In all it is doubtful whether 40 per cent. of the men who were of military age could have been called upon to fight. Happily, most of the unfit were available for the much needed

work of propaganda, since only a small percentage were troubled with pseudophobia, which alone was treated as ground for exemption from this class of work.

But, it hardly needs to be said, these same causes produced moral results as well as physical. Just before the outbreak of hostilities, we were all very much concerned about the attitude of organized Labour, which had never indeed been in power since Ropes's ill-fated Government, but had always been a strong political, and a still stronger economic influence, in the counsels of the country. There had not for some time been any actual strike on a large scale, the " secret service " both of employers and of labourers being sufficiently well informed to prevent any miscalculation : threats of strikes and of lock-outs were common, but it seldom proved necessary to call your adversary's bluff. Still, the Unions were an important power. Ever since the thirties it had been illegal for any manual worker not to belong to the union of his trade ; and this fact had strengthened the numerical force of the unions without in any way moderating their counsels since the time when (I think in the fifties) shop stewards began to be appointed by examination instead of election. The hot-heads were always in the controlling positions : what would the effect of this be in the event of the country going to war ? The International Labour Convention held at Innsbruck in '67 had passed a series of unanimous resolutions designed to render all future war impossible by means of concerted sabotage. Fortunately, the alleged violation of Article 259 by the British workers, and the

suspected violation of Article 283 by the U.S. workers, had the effect of rendering the whole compact nugatory. But the temper of Labour in all countries was, throughout the war, distrustful and frequently menacing.

At the other end of the scale, there can be no doubt that the paying classes, by the luxury and frivolity of their lives, showed equally little preparedness for a great emergency. Mere wealth seemed to be the only passport to Society, and blood counted for nothing: the old hereditary aristocracy who could trace their honours back to the beginning of the century were swamped by a crowd of new creations. No doubt in many ways we were more civilized than our fathers; the coarse old type that would fill a quarter of a glass with whisky, or motor at breakneck speed along country lanes, had disappeared; it was hard to imagine the rude days (which I can just remember) when the ladies left the dinner-table half an hour or so before the men, "leaving the gentlemen," as it was called, "to their wine." But if we had lost some of the coarseness, we had also lost much of the salutary sternness and moral earnestness of my young days. In the twenties and thirties the Divorce Court, although it was already fairly busy, did still carry with it, even for non-Catholics, a certain savour of impropriety. The novels and the plays of the period, although many of them offend our modern taste by the coarseness of their expression, must, by comparison with our own, be freed from the charge of suggestiveness. We gambled in those days, but you still had to go abroad to do it on a large scale; there was no wireless installation to report the winning

numbers on the tape machines of our West-End Clubs.

Family life, too, meant far more to us in the early part of the century than it did in the sixties and seventies. Even in London, husband and wife would share the same flat and entertain each other's friends When they paid visits of pleasure, to hunt, or to fish or to shoot deer (they were not content to photograph them as we do !), they often travelled together ; and there would have been something ludicrous in the idea of a husband and wife meeting one another unexpectedly at a country-house party or at a dinner. Fathers would take an active interest in the education of their children, and sometimes even be called in to reprove them for a fault. Girls, until the age of seventeen or eighteen, usually lived with their parents, and did not go about without somebody to take care of them. Boys did not expect to be provided with latch-keys until they were twenty-one ! For myself, I never had one until I set up my own establishment ; nor did I feel aggrieved at the deprivation. I do not mean that all these things are particularly important ; and indeed, the old tradition seems fussy and unnecessary to us nowadays ; but this strictness of guardianship did stand for symbol of a certain orderliness and discipline of behaviour, which I miss sometimes, I am afraid, among the young ladies and the young gentlemen of a later generation ! There was something to be said, after all, for the rugged old Puritan school which wore dark suits on Sundays, thought chewing unladylike, and held that night-clubs were " not the thing " for young girls.

How much this difference of outlook is the result of a decline in the matter of religious conviction, I cannot feel any certainty. As I see things, religion does not so often dictate to the world its standards of behaviour—a morality, or even a hypocrisy, can sometimes do that with equal effect—as help men and women to live up to the standards of the time and to rise above them. But I am afraid there is no doubt that in the sixties and seventies we had lost, in great measure, the unclouded faith and simple piety of the twenties and thirties. The religious revival in the Nonconformist Federation, which took place early in the sixties, was marked by no less extraordinary indications of spiritual exaltation than the revivals of earlier centuries; but alas! the total numbers of those who were affected by any movement within this body was no longer very considerable. The secession of the "Enthusiasts" in '53 had drained the Anglican Church of all the elements in its own body which might have responded to a call of this kind. The Westernizers seemed to have no energy but for Church politics; they achieved, indeed, for a few years the long-cherished dream of reunion with the crumbling relics of Byzantine Christianity, but it was only in the character of Little Bo-peep that they were able to do so. The bulk of what had been the "good-will" of the Anglican connexion remained with the Relativist Party, the historical descendant of the old Liberal school of thought. The relativists were men of considerable intellectual force and deeply religious temperament, but hampered, as any religious body must be, by a total absence of belief in

the supernatural. In the generation that had intervened between my girlhood and my old age Catholicism indeed had spread, but England had ceased to be a Christian country.

Whether or no decline in religion was the cause of it, it is certain that during that same generation the rigid virtues of the mid-Georgian era had been dissipated or obscured. A statesman of that earlier period would have resented the imputation of openly using his official knowledge to secure a business deal: we think of such an attitude as quixotic, but there was a certain nobility about it. The Press of that earlier period would have scorned to hush up a public scandal just because influential people were implicated in it: we call that a sentimental prejudice, but at least it was an error in the right direction. A divine of that earlier period would have felt a delicacy about subscribing to a formula of belief with which he found himself in total disagreement; it was a scruple, perhaps, but surely a scruple which did him honour. Men thought strenuously in those days, and lived earnestly, and worked without thought of reward. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven"—I can never read those lines of Wordsworth without being reminded of my girlhood's days; and of more than one figure in the public life of that time I am tempted to say, with the regretful tone of one who has outlived her generation: "He was a man, take him for all in all, We shall not look upon his like again."

I cannot resist quoting, while I am on this subject,

some words from the very last letter I ever received from my friend Lady Polebridge.[1] "You and I, my dear Opal," she typed, "belong to a generation that is disappearing, and will not regret us (for who ever does really regret us?) when we are gone. Nothing so strongly affects me, when I look back, as the strong sense of the mutability of human things. We poor creatures choose our own friends, make our own groups round us, only for the rude hand of circumstance to redistribute and rearrange us when it wills. No illusion lasts, no experience is other than transitory. And yet when we look back upon our young days, we can surely say that there was more of stability and permanence about those peaceful, slow-going times than we can find in the bustle and hurry of to-day. Our youth belongs to the last generation of English life that really saw life steadily and saw it whole; that really had its innermost core rooted in the hard rock of purposeful, strenuous living. I shall not be sorry to go, when my turn comes, to a world full of the shadows of my old companions, where I shall perhaps find peace at last."

Those words were written in 1971, only a year before the war actually broke out, and when, of course, we all saw that it was coming. Such then were the impressions of us older folk; and now let me leave it to my

[1] Previously Lady Travers-Grant, previously Mrs. Tarporley, previously Mme. de Brignard, previously Lady Stockdale, previously Lady Lushcombe, previously Mrs. Drake, previously Mrs. Sholto, previously Baroness Engelberg, née Hopkins.

younger readers to say whether since then, with all the good resolutions we made when the crisis was upon us, we have really gone forward or gone back? Have we really fulfilled the promise of those desperate moments when, under the shadow of a world-catastrophe, we thought we had for once seen ourselves as we would like to be? Let me quote, though they have been often quoted, the words of Mrs. Bisset, in the early part of 1975, that rang like a trumpet-call throughout the theatrophones of the civilized world:

"We shall not lightly forget the lessons of the recent conflict. If we have learned that human nature, even in its degradation, can rise in its might and throw off its old evil habits under the stimulus of a great emergency, we will tell ourselves, in the years to come, that this human nature is worth labouring for and worth fighting for. If we have seen, at the same time, that the ideals which once satisfied and the conditions which once contented us were ideals which ambition should have despised, and conditions which dignity should have resented, we will remember in the days to come that we must never again let ourselves be duped by the ignoble lure of a false peace. We have fought for honour, for civilization, for high aims and pure enthusiasms: we have met the powers of evil, and forced upon them the conditions of a not dishonourable peace. And the power which has been generated by these years of relentless friction will, if we but canalize it aright, galvanize through centuries to come the failing dynamos of humanity."

So it looked to us in '75; I leave it to the consciences

of my readers to determine whether we have lived up to those heroic sentiments.

And now I must unslip the catch, and put the lid upon my well-worn typewriter. I cannot tell what verdict will be passed on my poor efforts. In the old days, when reviewers held themselves bound to read through a book before they recorded their impressions of it, I should no doubt have had my weak points discovered by the eye of unfriendly criticism; to-day, one can still hope that one's deficiencies will pass unobserved! I am afraid, now I come to look back over the record, that after all it is a chronicle of small doings; if I had known that I was to write reminiscences in my old age, perhaps I would have travelled further in search of impressions, and striven higher so as to satisfy my readers with the story of greater things. As it is, it must pass for an old woman's gossip; and as such, let us hope that it will be lightly judged.

I have sometimes thought that it would be a pleasant occupation for the fancy to throw oneself forward into the future, and to write the imaginary reminiscences of an old lady, one's granddaughter, who was putting print to paper in 2050! What a strange picture she would give of ourselves! How often she would hit the mark, how often miss it by a hair's-breadth! She would let us see ourselves, I suppose, as a race of almost legendary heroes, to be spoken of with bated breath: ours would be the rugged virtues and the quaint, old-world ways! But the author who should attempt such a flight of the imagination would, no doubt, be accused not only of fantasy in his forecasts of the future, but of

misrepresentation in the picture he gave of his own times. It would be a perilous task; let me present the idea to anyone who will make use of it!

And so let me close my story, with a kindly thought for all my readers, and a tranquil regard for my own approaching end. That regard I cannot express better than in some old lines which I found in a book of travels [1]—the identity of the original author is uncertain:

> Look upward, for the sky is not all cloud.
> Look forward, think not of the dismal shroud.
> No lane but has a turning, and no road
> That leads not somewhere to a warm abode.
> Take courage. If the day seems rather long,
> The cooling dew will fall at evensong.
> Believe, and Doubt is sure to slink away;
> Doubt is a cur, and Fear is but a fool;
> Rely upon yourself and let your stay
> Be the observance of the heavenly rule.
> Never say die; and do not be afraid;
> At eventide the wages will be paid.

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[1] *ap.* Baring, Collected Works, Vol. IV, p. 231. The attribution of the lines to Wordsworth is now generally discredited.

# INDEX OF PERSONS REFERRED TO


PAGE

Adgate, Sir Mark, his curious watch . . . . 133
Albert, H.R.H. Prince (afterwards King Albert I) . 202
Amboise, Mademoiselle . . . . . 21
" Antoinette," her prescription . . . . . 80
Archdale, Leonard, the actor . . . . . 95
Banks, Wynefryde . . . . . 30, 118
Bates, Sir Arthur, his intrepid candidature . . . 151
Billericay, Lord . . . 129, 147, 177, 184, 187, 207
Birkenhead, Bishop of, amusing anecdote told by . 208
Bisset, Mrs., on War-aims . . . . . 238
Blisworth, Lady . . . 1, 10, 22, 25, 43, 73, 183
Blisworth, Lord . . . 1, 4, 11, 14, 16, 25, 81, 82
Bowles, Dr. . . . . 74
Brede, Marquis of . . . . . 166–168, 211
Breder, Dr., on raw tomatoes . . . . . 137
St. Briavel's, Countess of . . . . . 129
de Brignard, Comtesse, *see* Tarporley.
Burstall, the " Futurist " artist . . . . 173, 202
Bythorpe, Lord, his versatility . . . . . 41
Cheadle, Lord, his speech at Oxford . . . . 41
Combe, Lady . . . . 88–92, 112–114, 126, 180
Combe, Sir Richard . . . . . 88, 127
Crawshall, " Dick," rides a bicycle . . . . 131
Cubitt's house at Eton . . . . . 183
Dives, Canon 45–47, 50, 51, 119–122, 188, 212, 213–221, 225
Dolman, Dr., chest specialist . . . . . 158
Drake, Mrs., *see* Lushcombe.
Druce, Mr., Superintendent of the Berthellot Institute 77–79
Drysdale, Lady Jacynth, her coloured teeth . . 131
Drywater, Professor, of Aberdeen, on travelling expenses 162
Ducie, John, his reckless feats . . . . . 134
Engelberg, Baroness, *see* Sholto.
Engelstein, Lady . . . . . 131, 188
Farnham, the Hon. Mrs. . . . . 151

PAGE
Fearon, Hon. Algernon, his unusual accomplishment . 130
Feilding, Dr., of Christ Church, a popular lecturer . 36
ffynes, Sir Hugh . . . . . 211
Fitzgerald, the actor . . . . . 95
von Fleissing, Landgrab, on religion . . . . 60
Forres, Lady Anne . . . . . 38
Fothergill, Professor, the younger . . . . 194
Frodsham's house at Eton . . . . . 183
Garvice, Miss, on the Absolution . . . . 44
Geraghty, Daniel, Prime Minister of Ireland . . 194
Goodge, Dame Beatrice . . . . . 205
Grant, the late Mrs. . . . . 133
Griggs, Holbeach . . . . . 138–142
Grosheim, Lady Georgina . . . 131, 139, 140, 187
Gunter, Sir Hubert . . . . . 145, 165, 166
Hammond, George, the historian . . . 146, 207
Harkness, Francis . . 128, 158, 177, 179, 190, 191, 211
Harkness, Gervase . . 128, 157, 158, 177, 185, 190, 211
Harkness, Wilson, *see* Porstock, Lord.
Hawkesley, Tulip . . . . . 30
Hazelbright, Sir Philip . . . . . 157
Henricourt, the novelist . . . . . 196–197
Hodges, James . . . . 122–124, 127, 176
Hodgkins, Trevor, his breakfast at the Zoo . . 135
Holbrook, the actor . . . . . 95
Holly, Lady Frances, does "knitting" . . . 131
Holroyd, The Right Hon. James
155–157, 162, 166, 168–170, 210, 211
Hopedale, Viscount . . . 145, 147, 150, 152, 163, 188
Hopgood, Frank (afterwards White-Elephant-at-Arms) 106, 130
Hopgood, Irene, an exacting guest . . . . 130
Hopkins, *see* Engelberg.
Hopps, Adèle, and her hair . . . . . 132
Hoskyns, of B.N.C., the geographer . . 35, 42, 43, 119
Humbledon, Lady . . . . . 139
Krausenberg, Dr., his theory of education . . . 180
Labadie . . . . . 95
Leek, Sapphire : Countess of . . . . 137, 195
Lennox, the artist . . . . . 186, 202
Lestrange, General . . . . . 14

PAGE
Lieberts, "Tommy" . . . . . 129, 153, 188
Linklater, Sybil, Lady, her revolving ball-room . . 136
Linthorpe, Miss . 12, 13, 43, 51, 65, 66–71, 122, 123, 191, 224
Linthorpe, *see also* Blisworth, Lady.
Lock, "Archie" . 132, 135, 140, 142, 175, 177, 187, 207
Lushcombe, Lady, *see* Stockdale.
Macdonald, "Fatty" . . . . . 30
McGillivray, the comic artist . . . . . 208
McGinnis, His Grace Duke . . . . . 100
McKechnie, Mrs., her "Reminiscences Edwardian and Albertian" . . . . . 148, 149
Mainwaring, the poet . . . . . 189
Margate, Esther, her acute feminism . . . 206–207
Marrett, Lady . . . . . 204
Massachussets, Lady . . . . . 109, 110
Merewether, Dame Louise, her recklessness and caution . . . . . 135, 137
Mersham, Miss, numismatics mistress, runs away . 29
Michigan, Duke of . . . . . 131
Millthorpe, Viscount . . . . . 150
Montrose, Miss, Head Mistress . . . . 18–20, 165
Murchison, General . . . . . 102
van Murphy, Mr. and Mrs. . . . . 104–105
Myslok, the novelist . . . . . 63
Nuneaton, Angela Lady . . . . 135, 138, 139
O'Leary, the actor . . . . . 95
O'Leary, the K.C. . . . . 192–193
O'Shaugnessy, President (U.S.A.) . . . . 9
Palliser, Capt. Jane . . . . . 30
Partridge, Mrs. Justice . . . . . 193
Perse, Lord . . . . . 169
Peterson, the philanthropist . . . . . 229
Philpotts, Dame Horatia . . . . 154–155
Pirbright, Edgar, the poet . . . . 185, 199
Polebridge, Lady . 78, 93, 116–118, 126, 175, 186, 198, 237
Poltwhistle, Lord Chief Justice . . . . 192
Porstock, Wilson Lord . 100, 109–111, 124–127, 142, 170, 189
Poughkeepsie, Lord and Lady . . . . 103–105
Pulbrooke, Countess of (in her own right) . 167, 174, 187
Rivers, Mrs., on chewing . . . . . 107

PAGE
Ropes, Charles . . . . . 99, 147, 148
Rowlands, Rev. Agape
86, 87, 89–92, 108, 109, 114–116, 124, 127, 158, 176
Rowlands, Rev. Didymus . . 85, 87, 90, 91, 213
Rymer, Sir Alexander . . . . . 74
Sanderson, the Præteritist portrait-painter . 201–205
Sandham, Lord, wears " starched " collars . . . 133
Sandridge, Dr., Head Master of Eton . . . . 185
Savage, Juliet . 30, 31, 39, 41, 52, 77, 79, 86, 118, 119, 122, 125, 144, 172, 177, 187, 188, 206, 225
Schultz, Herr, the pædagogist . . . . 178–180
Shanks, Dr. . . . . 73
Sholto, Mrs., *see* Drake.
Sitwell, Dame Mary, the scalp specialist . . . 132
Smith, H.E., Cardinal, Archbishop of Westminster
189, 209, 221, 222
Sonnenschein, Miss . . . . . 77
Spink, Mrs., authoress of *Eugenics for Lower Forms* . 137
Stockdale, Lady, *see* de Brignard.
Tarporley, Mrs., *see* Travers-Grant, Lady.
Tonks, Arthur, Regius Professor of Statistics . . 163
Toogood, Ena . . . . . 37
Townshend's house at Eton . . . . . 183
Travers, Eustace, his versatility . . . . 41
Travers-Grant, Lady, *see* Polebridge.
Trecastle, Lady . . . . . 13, 14, 224
Trecastle, Lord, the last of the beavers . . . 133
Tremayne, James, his solution of the exchange problem 98
Tryer, Dr., her methods . . . . . 75, 76
Winterhead, *see* Blisworth, Lord.
Woollcombe, Miss, the bowler . . . . . 24
Wrightman, the sculptor . . . . . 173

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37